Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/beyond0000john_v4v2

NAM Sept '96.

50p
30p
10p

BEYOND

The Works of John Galsworthy

Cloth, 5s. net ; leather, 7s. 6d. net.

NOVELS

VILLA RUBEIN
THE ISLAND PHARISEES
THE MAN OF PROPERTY
THE COUNTRY HOUSE
FRATERNITY
THE PATRICIAN
THE DARK FLOWER
THE FREELANDS
BEYOND
FIVE TALES
SAINT'S PROGRESS
IN CHANCERY
TO LET

STORIES AND STUDIES

A COMMENTARY
A MOTLEY
THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY
TATTERDEMALION

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.

THE NOVELS OF JOHN GALSWORTHY

BEYOND

"Che farò senza——!"

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.

First published, August, 1917
New Impression, October, 1917;
February, 1918
Uniform Edition, September, 1921
New and Revised Edition, April, 1923;
January, 1924

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
BILLING AND SONS, LTD., GUILDFORD AND ESHER

All rights reserved.

To

THOMAS HARDY

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This narrative, written too hastily in wartime, has been drastically revised.

J. G.

PART I

1

At the door of St. George's registry office, Charles Clare Winton strolled forward in the wake of the taxi-cab that was bearing his daughter away with "the fiddler fellow" she had married. His sense of decorum forbade his walking with Nurse Betty—the only other witness of the wedding. A stout woman in a highly emotional condition would have companioned incongruously his slim, upright figure, moving with just that unexaggerated swing and balance becoming to a lancer of the old school, even if he has been on the retired list for sixteen years.

Poor Betty! He thought of her with irritated sympathy—she need not have given way to tears on the door-step. She might well feel lost now Gyp was gone, but not so lost as himself! His pale-gloved hand—the one real hand he had, for his right hand had been amputated at the wrist—twisted vexedly at the small, grizzling moustache lifting itself from the corners of his firm lips. On this grey February day he wore no overcoat; faithful to the absolute, almost shamefaced quietness of that wedding, he had not even donned black coat and silk hat, but wore a blue suit and a hard black felt. The instinct of a soldier and hunting man to exhibit no sign whatever of emotion did not desert him this dark day of his life; but his grey-hazel eyes kept contracting, staring fiercely, contracting again; and, at moments, as if overpowered by some deep feeling, they darkened and seemed to draw back in his head. His face was narrow and weathered and thin-cheeked, with a clean-cut jaw, small ears, hair darker than the moustache, but touched at the side wings with grey—the face of a man of action, self-reliant, resourceful. And his bearing was that of one who has always been a bit of a dandy, and paid attention to "form," yet been conscious sometimes that there were things beyond. A man, who, preserving all the precision of a type, yet had in him a streak of something not typical.

Making his way towards the park, he turned into Mount

Street. There was the house still, though the street had been very different then—the house he had passed, up and down in the fog, like a ghost, that November afternoon, like a cast-out dog, in agony of mind, twenty-three years ago, when Gyp was born. And then to be told at the door—he, with no right to enter, he, loving as he believed man never loved woman—to be told at the door that *she* was dead—dead in bearing what he and she alone knew was their child! Up and down in the fog, hour after hour, knowing her time was upon her; and at last to be told that! Of all fates that befell men, surely the most awful was to love too much.

Queer that his route should take him past the very house to-day, after this new bereavement! Accursed luck—that gout which had sent him to Wiesbaden last September! Accursed luck that Gyp had ever set eyes on this fellow Fiorsen, with his fatal fiddle! Certainly not since Gyp had come to live with him, fifteen years ago, had he felt so forlorn and fit for nothing. To-morrow he would get back to Mildenham and see what hard riding would do. Without Gyp—to be without Gyp! A fiddler! A chap who had never been on a horse in his life! And with his crutch-handled cane he switched viciously at the air, as though carving a man in two.

His club, near Hyde Park Corner, had never seemed to him so desolate. From sheer force of habit he went into the card-room. The afternoon had so darkened that electric light already burned, and the usual dozen of players were seated among the shaded gleams falling decorously on dark-wood tables, on the backs of chairs, on cards and tumblers, the little gilded coffee-cups, the polished nails of fingers holding cigars. A crony challenged him to piquet. He sat down listless. That three-legged whist—bridge—had always offended his fastidiousness—a mangled short cut of a game! Poker had something blatant in it. Piquet, though out of fashion, remained for him the only game worth playing—the only game which still had style. He held good cards, and rose the winner of five pounds

that he would willingly have paid to escape the boredom of the bout. Where would they be by now? Past Newbury; Gyp sitting opposite that Swedish fellow with his greenish wildcat's eyes. Something furtive, and so foreign, about him! A mess—if he were any judge of horse or man! Thank God he had tied Gyp's money up—every farthing! And an emotion that was almost jealousy swept him at the thought of the fellow's arms round his soft-haired, dark-eyed daughter—that pretty, willowy creature, so like in face and limb to her whom he had loved so desperately.

Eyes followed him when he left the card-room, for he was one who inspired in other men a kind of admiration—none could say exactly why. Many quite as noted for general good sportsmanship attracted no such attention. Was it the streak of something not quite typical—the brand left on him by the past?

Abandoning the club, he walked slowly along the railings of Piccadilly towards home, that house in Bury Street, St. James's, which had been his London abode since he was quite young—one of the few houses in the street left untouched by the passion for pulling down and building up, which had spoiled half London in his opinion.

A silent man, with the soft, quick, dark eyes of a woodcock, and a long, greenish, knitted waistcoat, black cutaway, and tight trousers strapped over his boots, opened the door.

"I shan't go out again, Markey. Mrs. Markey must give me some dinner. Anything will do."

Markey signalled that he had heard, and those eyes under eyebrows meeting and forming one long, dark line, took his master in from head to heel. He had already nodded last night, when his wife had said the guv'nor would take it hard. Retiring to the back premises, he jerked his head towards the street and made a motion upward with his hand, by which Mrs. Markey, an astute woman, understood that she had to go out and shop because the guv'nor was dining in. When she had gone, Markey

sat down opposite Betty, Gyp's old nurse. The stout woman was still crying in a quiet way. It gave him the fair hump, for he felt inclined to howl like a dog himself. After watching her broad, rosy, tearful face in silence for some minutes, he shook his head, and, with a gulp and a tremor of her comfortable body, Betty desisted. One paid attention to Markey.

Winton went first into his daughter's bedroom, and gazed at its emptied silken order, its deserted silver mirror, twisting viciously at his little moustache. Then, in his sanctum, he sat down before the fire, without turning up the light. Anyone looking in would have thought he was asleep; but the drowsy influence of that deep chair and cosy fire had drawn him back into the long-ago. What unhappy chance had made him pass *her* house to-day!

In theory there is no such thing as an affinity, no case—of a man, at least—made bankrupt of passion by a single love. In fact, there are such men—neck-or-nothing men, quiet and self-contained, the last to expect that nature will play them such a trick, the last to desire such surrender of themselves, or know when their fate is on them. Who could have seemed less likely than Charles Clare Winton to fall over head and ears in love when he stepped into the Belvoir Hunt ballroom at Grantham one December evening, twenty-four years ago? A keen soldier, a dandy, a first-rate man to hounds, already almost a proverb in his regiment for coolness and for a sort of courteous disregard of women as among the minor things of life—he had stood there by the door, in no hurry to dance, taking a survey with an air that just did not give an impression of "side" because it was not at all put on. And—behold!—*she* had walked past him, and his world was changed for ever. Was it an illusion of light which made her whole spirit seem to shine through a half-startled glance? Or a little trick of gait, a swaying, seductive balance of body; was it the way her hair waved back, or a subtle scent, as of a flower? What was it? The wife of a squire of those parts, with a house in London. There was no excuse—

not an ill-treated woman; an ordinary, humdrum marriage, of three years' standing; no children. An amiable, good fellow of a husband, fifteen years older than herself, inclined already to be an invalid. No excuse! Yet, in one month from that night, Winton and she were lovers, not only in thought but in deed. A thing so beyond "good form" and his sense of what was honourable and becoming in an officer and gentleman, that it was never a question of weighing pro and con; the cons had it so completely. And yet from that first evening, he was hers, she his. For each of them the one thought was how to be with the other. If so—why did they not at least go off together? Not for want of his beseeching. And no doubt, if she had survived Gyp's birth, they would have gone. But to face the prospect of ruining two men, as it looked to her, had till then been too much for that soft-hearted creature. Death stilled her struggle before it was decided. She was of those women in whom utter devotion can still go hand in hand with a doubting soul. Such are generally the most fascinating; for the power of hard and prompt decision robs women of mystery, of the subtle atmosphere of change and chance. Though she had but one part in four of foreign blood, she was not at all English. But Winton was English to his backbone, English in his sense of form, and in that curious streak of desperation which will break form to smithereens in one department and leave it untouched in every other of its owner's life. To have called Winton a "crank" would never have occurred to anyone—his hair was always perfectly parted; his boots glowed; he was hard and reticent, accepting and observing every canon of well-bred existence. Yet, in his one infatuation, he was lost to the world and its opinion. At any moment during that one year of their love he would have risked his life and sacrificed his career for a whole day in her company, yet he never, by word or look, compromised her. He had carried his punctilious observance of her "honour" to a point more bitter than death, consenting, even, to her covering up the tracks of their child's coming. Paying that gambler's debt was by

far the bravest deed of his life, and even now its memory festered.

To this very room he had come back after hearing she was dead; this room refurnished to her taste, so that even now, with its satinwood chairs, little dainty Jacobean bureau, shaded old brass candelabra, divan, it still had an air exotic to bachelordom. There, on the table, had been a letter recalling him to his regiment, ordered on active service. If he had realised what he would go through before he had the chance of trying to lose his life out there, he must have taken that life, sitting in this very chair before the fire. He had not the luck he wished for in that little war—he secured nothing but distinction. When it was over, he went on, with a few more lines in his face and heart, soldiering, shooting tigers, pig-sticking, playing polo, riding to hounds harder than ever; giving nothing away to the world; winning steadily the curious, uneasy admiration felt for those who combine reckless daring with an ice-cool manner. Less of a talker even than most of his kind, and never a talker about women, he did not gain the reputation of a woman-hater, though he so manifestly avoided them. After six years' service in India and Egypt, he lost his right hand in a charge against dervishes, and had to retire, with the rank of major, at the age of thirty-four. For a long time he had hated the very thought of the child —his child, in giving birth to whom the woman he loved had died. Then came a curious change of feeling; and for three years before his return to England, he had been in the habit of sending home odds and ends picked up in the bazaars, to serve as toys. In return, he had received, twice annually at least, a letter from the man who thought himself Gyp's father. These letters he answered. The squire had been fond of *her;* and though never once had it seemed possible to Winton to have acted otherwise than he did, he had all the time preserved a just and formal sense of the wrong he had done this man. He did not experience remorse, but he had always an irksome feeling as of a debt unpaid, mitigated by knowledge that no one had ever sus-

pected, and discounted by memory of the torture he had endured to make sure against suspicion.

When he was at last back in England, the squire had come to see him. The poor man was failing fast from Bright's disease. Winton entered again that house in Mount Street with an emotion, to stifle which required more courage than a cavalry charge. But one whose heart, as he would have put it, is "in the right place," does not indulge the quaverings of his nerves, and he faced those rooms where he had last seen her, faced a lonely little dinner with her husband, without sign of feeling. He did not see little Ghita, or Gyp, as she had nicknamed herself, for she was already in bed; and it was a whole month before he brought himself to go there at an hour when he could see the child if he would. He was afraid. What would the sight of this little creature stir in him? When Betty, the nurse, brought her in to see the soldier gentleman with "the leather hand," who had sent her those funny toys, she stood calmly staring with her large, deep-brown eyes. Being seven, her little brown velvet frock barely reached the knees of her thin, brown-stockinged legs planted one just in front of the other, as might be the legs of a small brown bird; the oval of her gravely wondering face was a warm cream colour without red in it, except that of the lips, which were neither full nor thin, and had a little tuck, the tiniest possible dimple at one corner. Her hair of warm dark brown had been specially brushed and tied with a narrow red ribbon back from her forehead, which was broad and rather low, and this added to her gravity. Her eyebrows were thin and dark and perfectly arched; her little nose perfectly straight, her little chin in perfect balance between round and point. She stood and stared till Winton smiled. Then the gravity of her face broke, her lips parted, her eyes seemed to fly a little. And Winton's heart turned over within him—she was the very child of her that he had lost! And he said, in a voice which seemed to him to tremble:

"Well, Gyp?"

"Thank you for my toys; I like them."

He held out his hand, and she put her small hand into it. A sense of solace, as if someone had slipped a finger in and smoothed his heart, came over Winton. Gently, so as not to startle her, he raised her hand a little, bent, and kissed it. Either because of his instant recognition that here was one as sensitive as child could be, or of some deeper instinctive sense of ownership between them from that moment, Gyp conceived for him a rushing admiration, one of those headlong affections children will sometimes take for the most unlikely persons.

He used to go there at an hour when he knew the squire would be asleep, between two and five. After he had been with Gyp, walking in the park, riding with her in the Row, or on wet days sitting in her lonely nursery telling stories, while stout Betty looked on half hypnotised, a rather queer and doubting look on her comfortable face—after such hours, he found it difficult to go to the squire's study and sit opposite him, smoking. Those interviews reminded him too much of past days, when he had kept such a desperate check on himself. The squire welcomed him eagerly, saw nothing, felt nothing, was grateful for his goodness to the child. He had died in the following spring. And Winton found that he had been made Gyp's guardian and trustee. Since his wife's death, the squire had muddled his affairs, his estate was heavily mortgaged; but Winton accepted the position with an almost savage satisfaction, and, from that moment, schemed deeply to get Gyp all to himself. The Mount Street house was sold; the Lincolnshire place let. She and Nurse Betty were installed at his own hunting-box, Mildenham. In this effort to get her away from all the squire's relations, he employed to the utmost his power of making people feel him unapproachable. Never impolite, he simply froze them out. Well-off himself, his motives could not be called in question. In one year he had isolated her from all except stout Betty. He had no qualms, for Gyp was no more happy away from him than he from her. He had

at last decided that she should be called by his name, round Mildenham. It was to Markey he gave the order that Gyp was to be little Miss Winton for the future. When he came in from hunting that day, Betty was waiting in his study. She stood in the emptiest part of that rather dingy room. Her round, rosy face was confused between awe and resolution, and she had made a sad mess of her white apron. Her blue eyes met Winton's with a sort of desperation.

"About what Markey told me, sir. My old master wouldn't have liked it, sir."

Touched on the raw, Winton said icily:

"Indeed! You will be good enough to comply with my wish, all the same."

The stout woman's face grew very red.

"Yes, sir; but I've seen what I've seen. I never said anything, but I've got eyes. If Miss Gyp's to take your name, sir, then tongues 'll wag, and my dear, dead mistress——"

At the look on his face she stopped.

"You will be kind enough to keep your thoughts to yourself. If any word or deed of yours gives the slightest excuse for talk—you go, and you never see Gyp again! In the meantime you will do what I ask. Gyp is my adopted daughter."

She had always been a little afraid of him, but she had never seen that look in his eyes or heard him speak in that voice. And, bending her full moon of a face, she went, with her apron crumpled and tears in her eyes. Winton, at the window, watching the darkness gather, the leaves flying by on a sou'-westerly wind, drank his cup of bitter triumph. He had never had the right to that dead, forever-loved mother of his child. He meant to have the child. If tongues must wag, let them! This was a defeat of all his previous precaution, a deep victory of natural instinct. And his eyes narrowed and stared into the darkness.

II

In spite of victory over all human rivals in the heart of Gyp, Winton had a rival whose strength he fully realised perhaps for the first time now that she was gone, and he, before the fire, was brooding over her departure and the past. Not likely that one of his decisive type, whose life had so long been bound up with swords and horses, would grasp what music might mean to a little girl. She required, he knew, to be taught scales, and "In a Cottage near a Wood" with other melodies. He took care not to go within sound of them, and had no conception of the avidity with which Gyp had mopped up all, and more than all, her governess could teach her. He was blind to the rapture with which she listened to any stray music—to carols in the Christmas dark, to certain hymns, and one special "Nunc Dimittis" in the village church; to the horn of the hunter far out in the quivering, dripping coverts; even to Markey's whistling, which was strangely sweet.

He could share her love of dogs and horses, take an anxious interest in her way of catching bumble-bees in the hollow of her hand and putting them to her small, delicate ear to hear them buzz, sympathise with her continual ravages among the flower-beds, in the old-fashioned garden, full of lilacs and laburnums in spring, pinks, roses, corn-flowers in summer, dahlias and sunflowers in autumn, and always a little neglected and overgrown, a little squeezed in, and elbowed by the more important surrounding paddocks. He could sympathise with her attempts to draw his attention to the song of the birds; but it was simply not in him to understand how she loved and craved for music. She was a cloudy little creature, up and down in mood—rather like a brown lady spaniel that she had, now gay as a butterfly, now brooding as night. Any touch of harshness she took to heart fearfully. Pride and self-disparagement seemed mixed in her so deeply that none knew of which her cloudy fits were the result. Sensitive, she "fancied" things terribly. What others did to her, and

thought nothing of, often seemed to her conclusive evidence that she was not loved by anybody, though she wanted to love everyone—nearly. Then she would feel: "If they don't love me, I don't care. I don't want anything of anybody!" And, presently, all would blow away just like a cloud, and she would love and be gay, until something fresh, perhaps not at all meant to hurt her, would again hurt her horribly. In reality, the whole household loved and admired her. But she was one of those delicate-treading beings, born with a skin too few, who—and especially in childhood—suffer from themselves in a world born with a skin too many.

To Winton's delight, she knew no fear on horseback. She had the best governess he could get her, the daughter of an admiral, in distressed circumstances; and later on, a tutor for her music, who came twice a week all the way from London—a sardonic man who cherished for her even more secret admiration than she for him. Unlike most girls, she never had an epoch of awkward plainness, but grew like a flower, evenly, steadily. Winton often gazed at her with a sort of intoxication; the turn of her head, the way those perfectly shaped, wonderfully clear brown eyes would "fly," the set of her straight, round neck, the very shaping of her limbs, were all such poignant reminders of what he had so loved. And yet, for all that likeness to her mother, there was a difference, both in form and character. Gyp had, as it were, an extra touch of chiselling in body, more fastidiousness in soul, a little more poise, a little more sheer grace; in mood more variance, in mind more clarity, and, mixed with her sweetness, a distinct spice of scepticism which her mother had lacked.

Though delicate in build, she was not frail, and out hunting would "go" all day, and come in so tired that she would drop on to the tiger skin before the fire, rather than face the stairs. Life at Mildenham was lonely, save for Winton's hunting cronies, and they but few, for his spiritual dandyism did not gladly suffer the average country gentleman, and his frigid courtesy frightened women.

As Betty had foreseen, tongues did wag—those tongues of the countryside, avid of spice in the tedium of dull lives and brains. And, though no breath of gossip came to Winton's ears, no women visited at Mildenham. Save for the friendly casual acquaintanceships of churchyard, hunting-field, and local race-meetings, Gyp grew up knowing hardly any of her own sex. This dearth developed her reserve, kept her backward in sex-perception, gave her a faint, unconscious contempt for men—always at the beck and call of her smile, and easily disquieted by a little frown—gave her also a secret yearning for companions of her own gender, who always took a fancy to her, which made the transitory nature of these friendships tantalising.

Her moral and spiritual growth was not the sort of subject to which Winton could pay much attention. It was pre-eminently a matter one did not talk about. Outward forms, such as going to church, should be preserved; manners should be taught her by his own example as much as possible; beyond this, nature must look after things. His view had much real wisdom. She was a quick and voracious reader, bad at remembering what she read; and though she had soon devoured all the books in Winton's meagre library, including Byron, Whyte-Melville, and Humboldt's "Cosmos," they had not left much on her mind. The attempts of her little governess to impart religion were somewhat arid of result, and the interest of the vicar, Gyp, with her instinctive spice of scepticism, soon put into the same category as the interest of all the other males she knew. She felt that he enjoyed calling her "my dear" and patting her shoulder, and that this enjoyment was enough reward for his exertions.

Tucked away in that little old dark manor house, whose stables alone were up to date—three hours from London, and some thirty miles from The Wash, her upbringing lacked modernity. About twice a year Winton took her to town to stay with his unmarried sister Rosamund in Curzon Street. Those weeks increased her natural taste for charming clothes, fortified her teeth, and fostered her

passion for music and the theatre. But the two main nourishments of the modern girl—discussion and games—she lacked utterly. Those years of her life from fifteen to nineteen were before the social resurrection of 1906, and the world still crawled like a winter fly on a window-pane. Winton was a Tory, Aunt Rosamund a Tory, everybody round her a Tory. The only spiritual influence on her girlhood was her headlong love for her father. The sense of form both had in high degree prevented much demonstration; but to be with him, do things for him, to admire, and credit him with perfection; and, since she could not exactly wear the same clothes or speak in the same clipped, quiet, decisive voice, to dislike the clothes and voices of other men—all this was precious to her beyond everything. If she inherited his fastidious sense of form, she also inherited his capacity for putting all her eggs in one basket. And since her company alone gave him real happiness, the current of love flowed over her heart all the time. Abundant love *for* somebody was as necessary to her as water running up the stems of flowers, abundant love *from* somebody as needful as sunshine on their petals. And Winton's somewhat frequent little runs to town, to Newmarket, or where not, were always marked in her by a fall of the barometer, which recovered as his return grew near.

One part of her education, at all events, was not neglected—cultivation of an habitual sympathy with her poorer neighbours. Without concerning himself in the least with problems of sociology, Winton had by nature an open hand and heart for cottagers, and abominated interference with their lives. And so Gyp, who by nature also never set foot anywhere without invitation, was always hearing the words: "Step in, Miss Gyp;" "Step in and sit down, lovey;" and a good many words besides from even the boldest and baddest characters, who liked her pretty face and sympathetic listening.

So passed the eleven years till she was nineteen and Winton forty-six. Then, under the wing of her little

governess, she went to the hunt-ball. Her dress, perfect in fit, was not white, but pale maize-colour, as if she had already been to dances. She had all Winton's dandyism, and just so much more as was appropriate to her sex. With her dark hair, fluffed and coiled, waving across her forehead, her neck bare for the first time, her eyes really "flying," and a demeanour perfectly cool—as though she knew that light and movement, covetous looks, soft speeches, and admiration were her birthright—she was more beautiful than even Winton had thought her. At her breast she wore a bunch of cyclamen procured by him from town—a flower of whose scent she was very fond. Swaying and delicate, warmed by excitement, she reminded him, in every movement and by every glance of her eyes, of her whom he had first met at just such a ball as this. And by the carriage of his head he conveyed to the world the pride he was feeling.

That evening held many sensations for Gyp—some delightful, one confused, one unpleasant. Admiration was dear to her. She passionately enjoyed dancing, loved feeling that she was dancing well and giving pleasure. But, twice over, she sent away her partners, smitten with compassion for her little governess sitting against the wall with no one to take notice of her, because she was elderly, and roundabout! And, to that loyal person's horror, she insisted on sitting beside her all through two dances. Nor would she go in to supper with anyone but Winton. Returning to the ballroom on his arm, she overheard an elderly woman say: "Oh, don't you know? Of course he really *is* her father!" and an elderly man answer: "Ah, that accounts for it—quite so!" She could see their inquisitive, cold, slightly malicious glances, and knew they were speaking of her. And just then her partner came for her.

"Really *is* her father!" The words meant too much to be grasped this evening of full sensations. They left a little bruise somewhere, but softened and anointed, just a sense of confusion at the back of her mind. And very

soon came that other sensation, ugly and disillusioning. It was after a dance with a good-looking man quite twice her age. They were sitting behind some palms, when suddenly he bent his flushed face and kissed her bare arm above the elbow. If he had hit her he could not have astonished or hurt her more. It seemed to her innocence that he would never have done such a thing if she had not said something dreadful to encourage him. She got up, gazed at him a moment with eyes dark from pain, shivered, and slipped away. She went straight to Winton. From her face, all closed up, her tightened lips, and the familiar little droop at their corners, he knew something dire had happened; but she would say nothing except that she was tired and wanted to go home. And so, with the faithful governess, who, having been silent perforce nearly all the evening, was now full of conversation, they drove out into the frosty night. Winton sat beside the chauffeur, smoking viciously, his fur collar turned up over his ears, his eyes stabbing the darkness, under his round, low-drawn fur cap. Who had dared upset his darling? And, within the car, the little governess chattered softly, and Gyp in her dark corner sat silent, seeing nothing but that insult.

She lay awake long hours in the darkness, while coherence was forming in her mind. Those words: "Really *is* her father!" and that man's kissing of her bare arm, were a sort of revelation of sex-mystery, hardening the consciousness that there was something at the back of her life. A child so sensitive had not, of course, quite failed to feel the spiritual draughts around her; but instinctively she had recoiled from more definite perceptions. The time before Winton came was all so faint—Betty, toys, short glimpses of a kind, invalidish man called "Papa." In that word there was no depth compared with the word "Dad" bestowed on Winton. None, except Betty, had ever talked of her mother. There was nothing sacred in Gyp's associations, no faiths to be broken by any knowledge that might come to her; isolated from other girls, she had little realisation even of the conventions. But she suffered

horribly, lying there in the dark—from bewilderment, from thorns dragged over her skin, rather than from a stab in the heart. The knowledge of something about her conspicuous, doubtful, provocative of insult, as she thought, hurt grievously. Those few wakeful hours made a heavy mark. She fell asleep at last, still all in confusion, and woke up with a passionate desire to *know*. All that morning she sat at her piano, playing, refusing to go out, frigid to Betty and her governess, till the former was reduced to tears and the latter to Wordsworth. After tea she went to Winton's study, that dingy little room where he never studied anything, with leather chairs and books which—except "Mr. Jorrocks," Byron, those on the care of horses, and the novels of Whyte-Melville—he never read; with prints of superequine celebrities, his sword, and photographs of Gyp and of brother officers on the walls; with only two bright spots—the fire, and the little bowl that Gyp always kept filled with flowers.

When she came gliding in, slender and rounded, her creamy, dark-eyed, oval face all cloudy, she seemed to Winton to have grown up of a sudden. He had been cudgelling his brains all day. From the fervour of his love he felt an anxiety that was almost fear. What could have happened last night—the first night of her entrance into meddlesome, gossiping society! She slid down to the floor against his knee. He could not see her face, could not even touch her; for she had settled down on his right side. He mastered his tremors and said:

"Well, Gyp—tired?"

"No."

"A little bit?"

"No."

"Was it up to what you thought, last night?"

"Yes."

The logs hissed and crackled; the long flames ruffled in the chimney-draught; the wind roared outside—then, so suddenly that it took his breath away:

"Dad, are you really and truly my father?"

In the few seconds before an answer that could in no way be evaded, Winton had time for a tumult of reflection. A less resolute character would have been caught by mental blankness, then flung itself in panic on "Yes" or "No." But Winton would not answer without having faced the consequences of his reply. To be her father was the most warming thing in his life; but if he avowed it, how far would he injure her love for him? What did a girl know? How make her understand? What would her feeling be about her dead mother? How would that dead loved one feel? What would she have wished?

It was a cruel moment. And the girl, pressed against his knee, with face hidden, gave him no help. Impossible to keep it from her, now that her instinct was roused! And, clenching his hand on the arm of his chair, he said:

"Yes, Gyp; your mother and I loved each other."

He felt a quiver go through her, would have given much to see her face. What, even now, did she understand? Well, it must be gone through with, and he said:

"What made you ask?"

She shook her head and murmured:

"I'm glad."

Grief, shock, even surprise, would have roused all his loyalty to the dead, all the old stubborn bitterness, and he would have frozen up against her. But this acquiescent murmur made him long to smooth it down.

"Nobody has ever known. She died when you were born. It was a fearful grief to me. If you've heard anything, it's just gossip, because you go by my name. Your mother was never talked about. But it's best you should know, now you're grown up. People don't often love as she and I loved. You needn't be ashamed."

Her face was still turned from him. She said quietly:

"I'm not ashamed. Am I very like her?"

"Yes; more than I could ever have hoped."

"Then you don't love me for myself?"

Winton was but dimly conscious of how that question revealed her nature, its power of piercing instinctively to

the heart of things, its sensitive pride, and demand for utter and exclusive love. And he simply said:

"What do you think?"

Then, to his dismay, he perceived that she was crying—struggling against it so that her shoulder actually shook his knee. He had hardly ever known her cry, not in all the disasters of unstable youth, and she had received her full meed of knocks and tumbles. He could only stroke that shoulder, and say:

"Don't cry, Gyp; don't cry."

She ceased as suddenly as she had begun, got up, and, before he too could rise, was gone.

That evening, at dinner, she was just as usual. He could not detect the slightest difference in her voice or manner, or in her good-night kiss. A moment that he had dreaded for years was over, leaving only the faint shame which follows a breach of reticence on the spirits of those who worship it. While the old secret had been quite undisclosed, it had not troubled him. Disclosed, it hurt him. But Gyp, in those twenty-four hours, had left childhood behind for good; her feeling towards men had hardened. If she did not hurt them a little, they would hurt her! The sex-instinct had come to life.

III

The next two years were much less solitary, passed in more or less constant gaiety. His confession had spurred Winton on to the fortification of his daughter's position. He would not have her looked on askance. Whether at Mildenham, or in London under the wing of his sister, there was no difficulty. Gyp was too pretty, Winton too cool, his quietness too formidable. She had every advantage.

The day that she came of age they were up in town, and he summoned her to the room, in which he now sat by the fire recalling all these things, to receive an account of his stewardship. He had nursed her greatly embarrassed inheritance very carefully till it amounted to some twenty thousand pounds. He had never told her of it—the subject was dangerous, and, since his own means were ample, she had not wanted for anything. When he had explained exactly what she owned, shown her how it was invested, and told her that she must now open her own banking account, she stood gazing at the sheets of paper, whose items she had been supposed to understand, and her face gathered the look which meant that she was troubled. Without lifting her eyes she asked:

"Does it all come from—him?"

He had not expected that.

"No; eight thousand of it was your mother's."

Gyp looked at him, and said:

"Then I won't take the rest—please, Dad."

Winton felt a sort of crabbed pleasure. What should be done with that money if she did not take it, he did not know. But not to take it was like her, made her more than ever his daughter—a kind of final victory. He turned away to the window from which he had so often watched for her mother. There was the corner she used to turn! In one minute, surely she would be standing there, colour glowing in her cheeks, her eyes soft behind her veil, her breast heaving a little with her haste, waiting for his

embrace. There she would stand, drawing up her veil. He turned round. Difficult to believe it was not she! And he said:

"Very well, my love. But you will take the equivalent from me instead. The other can be put by; someone will benefit some day!"

At those unaccustomed words, "My love," from his undemonstrative lips, the colour mounted in her cheeks and her eyes shone. She threw her arms round his neck.

She had her fill of music in those days, taking piano lessons from a Monsieur Harmost, a grey-haired native of Liége, with mahogany cheeks and the touch of an angel, who kept her hard at work and called her his "little friend." There was scarcely a concert of merit that she did not attend or a musician of mark whose playing she did not know, and, though fastidiousness saved her from squirming in adoration round the feet of these prodigious performers, she perched them all on pedestals, men and women alike, and now and then met them at her aunt's house in Curzon Street.

Aunt Rosamund, also musical, so far as breeding would allow, stood for a good deal to Gyp, who had built up about her a romantic story of love wrecked by pride. She was a tall, handsome woman, a year older than Winton, with a long, aristocratic face, deep-blue, rather shining eyes, a gentlemanly manner, warm heart, and a not unmelodious drawl. Very fond of Gyp, what passed within her mind as to their real relationship, remained ever discreetly hidden. She was, too, something of a humanitarian, and the girl had just that softness which fascinates women who perhaps might have been happier if they had been born men. A cheery soul, given to long coats and waistcoats, stocks, and a crutch-handled stick, she—like her brother—had "style," but more sense of humour—valuable in musical circles! And at her house, the girl was practically compelled to see fun as well as merit in all those prodigies, haloed with hair and filled to overflowing with music and themselves.

Winton had his first really bad attack of gout when Gyp was twenty-two, and, terrified lest he might not be able to sit a horse in time for the opening meets, he went off with her and Markey to Wiesbaden. They had rooms in the Wilhelmstrasse, overlooking the gardens, where leaves were already turning. The cure was long and obstinate. Attended by the silent Markey, Gyp rode daily on the Neroberg, chafing at regulations which reduced her to specified tracks in that majestic wood; and once or even twice a day she would go to the concerts in the *Kurhaus*, either with her father or alone.

The first time she heard Fiorsen play she was alone. Unlike most violinists, he was tall and thin, with great pliancy of body and movement. His face was pale, and went strangely with hair and moustache of a dirt-gold colour, and his thin cheeks with very broad high cheek-bones, had little narrow scraps of whisker. He seemed rather awful to Gyp—but his playing stirred and swept her in an uncanny way. He had remarkable technique; and the intense wayward feeling of his playing was chiselled by it, as if a flame were being frozen in its swaying. She did not join in the tornado of applause, but sat motionless, looking up at him. He passed the back of his hand across his hot brow, shoving up a wave or two of that queer-coloured hair; then, with a rather disagreeable smile, made a short supple bow. What strange eyes he had—like a great cat's! Surely they were green; fierce, yet almost furtive—mesmeric! The strangest man she had ever seen, and the most frightening. He seemed looking straight at her; and, dropping her gaze, she clapped. When she looked again, his face had a kind of wistfulness. He made another of those little supple bows straight at her, and jerked his violin up to his shoulder. 'He's going to play to me,' she thought absurdly. He played without accompaniment a little tune which seemed to tweak the heart. This time she did not look up, but was conscious that he gave one impatient bow and walked off.

That evening at dinner she said to Winton:

"I heard a violinist to-day, Dad, the most wonderful playing—Gustav Fiorsen. Is that Swedish—or what?"

Winton answered:

"Very likely. What sort to look at? I used to know a Swede in the Turkish army—nice fellow."

"Tall and thin and white-faced, with bumpy cheek bones, and hollows under them, and queer green eyes. Oh, and little goldy side-whiskers."

"By Jove! It sounds the limit."

Gyp murmured, with a smile:

"Yes; I think perhaps he is."

She saw him next day in the gardens. They were sitting close to the Schiller statue, Winton reading *The Times*, to whose advent he looked forward more than he admitted, for he was loath by confessions of boredom to disturb Gyp's enjoyment of her stay. Perusing the account of a Newmarket meeting, he kept stealing sidelong glances at his daughter.

She had never looked prettier, daintier, shown more breeding than she did out here among all the cosmopolitan hairy-heeled crowd in this God-forsaken place! The girl, unconscious of his stealthy regalement, was letting her clear eyes rest, in turn, on each figure that passed, on the movements of birds and dogs, watching the sunlight glisten on the grass, burnish the copper beeches, the lime-trees, and those tall poplars down there by the water. The doctor at Mildenham, once consulted on a bout of headache, had called her eyes "perfect organs," and certainly no eyes could take things in more swiftly or completely. She was attractive to dogs, and every now and then one would stop, in two minds whether or no to put his nose into this foreign girl's hand. From a flirtation of eyes with a great Dane, she looked up and saw Fiorsen passing, in company with a shorter, square man, having very fashionable trousers and a corseted waist. The violinist's tall, thin, loping figure was tightly buttoned into a brownish grey frock-coat suit; he wore a rather broad-brimmed grey, velvety hat: in his buttonhole was a white flower,

his cloth topped boots were of patent leather; his tie bunched out at the ends over a soft white linen shirt — altogether quite a dandy! His most strange eyes suddenly swept down on hers, and he made a movement as if to put his hand to his hat.

'Why, he remembers me!' she thought. That thin-wasted figure with head set just a little forward between rather high shoulders, and its long stride, curiously suggested a leopard or some lithe creature. He touched his short companion's arm, muttered something, turned round, and came back. She could see him staring her way, and knew he was coming simply to look at her. She knew, too, that her father was watching. And she felt that those greenish eyes would waver before his stare — that stare of the Englishman of a certain class, which never condescends to be inquisitive. They passed; Gyp saw Fiorsen turn to his companion, slightly tossing back his head in their direction, and heard the companion laugh. A little flame shot up in her.

Winton said:

"Rum-looking Johnnies one sees here!"

"That was the violinist I told you of—Fiorsen."

"Oh! Ah!" But he had evidently forgotten.

That Fiorsen should have remembered her out of all that audience subtly flattered her vanity. She lost her ruffled feeling. Though her father thought his dress awful, it was really rather becoming. He would not have looked as well in proper English clothes. Once, at least, during the next two days, she noticed the short, square young man who had been walking with him, and was conscious that he followed her with his eyes.

And then a certain Baroness von Maisen, a cosmopolitan friend of Aunt Rosamund's, German by marriage, half-Dutch, half-French, by birth, asked her if she had heard the Swedish violinist, Fiorsen. He would be the best violinist of the day, if — and she shook her head. Finding that expressive shake unquestioned, the baroness pursued her thoughts:

"Ah, these musicians! He wants saving from himself. If he does not halt soon, he will be lost. Pity! A great talent!"

Gyp looked at her steadily and asked:

"Does he drink, then?"

"*Pas mal!* But there are things besides drink, *ma chère.*"

Instinct and so much life with Winton made the girl regard it as beneath her to be shocked. She did not seek knowledge of life, but refused to shy away from it; and the baroness, to whom innocence was piquant, went on:

"Women, always women! A great pity! It will spoil his spirit. His sole chance is to find one woman, but I pity her; *sapristi*, what a life for her!"

Gyp said calmly:

"Would a man like that ever love?"

The baroness goggled her eyes.

"I have known such a man become a slave. I have known him running after a woman like a lamb while she was deceiving him here and there. *On ne peut jamais dire. Ma belle, il y a des choses que vous ne savez pas encore.*" She took Gyp's hand. "And yet, one thing is certain. With those eyes, *you* have a time before you!"

Gyp withdrew her hand and shook her head; she did not believe in love.

"Ah, but you will turn some heads! No fear! as you English say. There is fatality in those pretty brown eyes!"

A girl may be pardoned who takes as a compliment the saying that her eyes are fatal. The words warmed Gyp, uncontrollably light-hearted in these days, just as she was warmed when people turned to stare at her. The soft air, the mellowness of this gay place, much music, a sense of being rare among people who, by their heavier type, enhanced her own, had produced in her a kind of intoxication, making her what the baroness called "*un peu folle.*" She was always breaking into laughter. Everything to her just then was either "funny" or "lovely." And the baroness, conscious of the girl's *chic*, genuinely attracted

by one so pretty, took care that she saw all the people, perhaps more than all, who were desirable.

Curiosity is a vivid emotion. The more a man has conquered, the more precious field he is for a woman's conquest. To attract one who had attracted many, what was it but a proof that one's charm was superior to that of all those others? The words of the baroness deepened in Gyp the impression that Fiorsen was "impossible," but secretly fortified the faint excitement she felt that he should have remembered her out of all that audience. Later on, they bore more fruit than that. But first came that queer incident of the flowers.

Coming in from a ride, a week after she had sat with Winton under the Schiller statue, she found on her dressing-table a bunch of Gloire de Dijon and La France roses. There was no card. All that the German maid could say was that a boy had brought them from a flower shop "for Fräulein Vinton"; Gyp surmised that they came from the baroness. In her bodice at dinner, and to the concert after, she wore one La France and one Gloire de Dijon—a daring mixture of pink and orange against her oyster-coloured frock. They had bought no programme, all music being the same to Winton, and Gyp not needing any.

When Fiorsen came forward, her cheeks began to colour from sheer anticipation. He played first a minuet by Mozart; then the César Franck sonata; and, coming back to make his bow, held in his hand a Gloire de Dijon and a La France rose. Involuntarily Gyp raised her hand to her own roses. His eyes met hers; he bowed just a little lower. He put the roses to his lips in walking off the platform, and Gyp dropped her hand, as if it had been stung. Should she take out those roses and let them fall? Her father might see, might notice Fiorsen's—put two and two together! He would consider she had been insulted. Had she? She could not bring herself to think so. It was a compliment, as if he wished to tell her that he was playing to her alone. The baroness's words flashed through

her mind: "He wants saving from himself. Pity! A great talent!" It *was* a great talent. There must be something worth saving in one who could play like that! They left after his last solo. Gyp put the two roses carefully back among the others.

Three days later, she went to an afternoon "at-home" at the Baroness von Maisen's. She saw him at once, over by the piano, with his short, square companion, listening to a voluble lady, and looking bored and restless. All that overcast afternoon, still and with queer lights in the sky, as if rain were coming, she had been feeling out of mood, a little homesick. Now she felt excited. She saw the short companion go up to the baroness; a minute later, he was brought to her and introduced—Count Rosek. Gyp did not like his face; there were dark rings under the eyes, and he was too perfectly self-possessed, with a kind of cold sweetness; but he was agreeable and polite, and spoke English well. He was—it seemed—a Pole, who lived in London, and knew all that was to be known about music. Miss Winton—he believed—had heard his friend Fiorsen play; but not in London? No? That was odd; he had been there some months last season. Faintly annoyed at her ignorance, Gyp answered:

"Yes; but I was in the country nearly all last summer."

"He had a great success. I shall take him back; it is best for his future. What do you think of his playing?"

In spite of herself, for she did not like expanding to this sphinxlike little man, Gyp murmured:

"Oh, simply wonderful, of course!"

He nodded, and then rather suddenly said, with a peculiar little smile:

"May I introduce him? Gustav—Miss Winton!"

Gyp turned. He was just behind her, bowing; and his eyes had a look of humble adoration which he made no attempt whatever to conceal. Gyp saw another smile slide over the Pole's lips; and she was alone in the bay window with Fiorsen. Close to, he had not so much that look of an animal behind bars, and he certainly was in his

way a dandy, beautifully groomed, and having some pleasant essence on his handkerchief or hair, of which she would have disapproved if he had been English. He wore a diamond ring also, which did not somehow seem bad form on that particular little finger. His height, broad cheekbones, thick but not long hair, the hungry vitality of his face, figure, movements, annulled those evidences of femininity. He was male enough, rather too male. Speaking with a queer, crisp accent, he said:

"Miss Winton, you are my audience here, I play to you—only to you."

Gyp laughed.

"You laugh at me; but you need not. I play for you because I admire you. I admire you terribly. If I sent you those flowers, it was not to be rude. It was my gratitude for the pleasure of your face." His voice actually trembled. And, looking down, Gyp answered:

"It was very kind of you. I want to thank you, too, for your playing. It is beautiful—really beautiful!"

He made her another little bow.

"When I go back to London, will you come and hear me?"

"I should think anyone would go to hear you, if they had the chance."

He gave a short laugh.

"I am here for money; I hate this place. It bores me! Was that your father sitting with you under the statue?"

Gyp nodded. She had not forgotten the slighting turn of his head.

He passed his hand over his face, as if to wipe off its expression.

"He is very English. But you—of no country—and of all!"

Gyp made him an ironical little bow.

"No; I should not know your country—you are neither of the North nor of the South. I came here hoping to meet you; I am extremely happy. Miss Winton, I am your very devoted servant."

He was speaking very fast, very low, with an agitated earnestness surely not put on. Then suddenly muttering: "These people!" he made her another of his little bows and abruptly slipped away. The baroness was bringing up another man. The thought left by that meeting was: 'Is that how he begins to everyone?' She could not quite believe it. The stammering earnestness of his voice, those humbly adoring looks!

Too sensitive to confide in anyone, she had no chance to ventilate the curious sensations of attraction and repulsion fermenting in her, feelings defying analysis, mingling and quarrelling deep down in her heart. It was certainly not love, not even the beginning of that; but it was the kind of dangerous interest children feel in things mysterious, out of reach, yet within reach, if only they dared! And the tug of music was there, and the tug of those words of the baroness about salvation—the thought of achieving the impossible, reserved only for——! But all these thoughts and feelings were as yet in embryo. She might never see him again! She did not even know whether she wanted to.

IV

Gyp was in the habit of walking with her father to the Kochbrunnen, where, with other patient folk, he was required to drink slowly for twenty minutes every morning. While he was thus imbibing she would sit in a remote corner of the garden, and read a novel in the *Reclam* edition, by way of a German lesson.

She was sitting there, the morning after the "at-home" at the Baroness von Maisen's, reading Turgenev's "Torrents of Spring," when she saw Count Rosek sauntering down the path with a glass of the waters in his hand. Memory of the smile with which he had introduced Fiorsen sent her to cover beneath her sunshade. She could see his patent-leathered feet, and well-turned, pegtop-trousered legs go by with the gait of a man whose waist is corseted. The conviction that he wore those prerogatives of womanhood increased her dislike. How dare men be so effeminate? Yet someone had told her that he was a good rider, a good fencer, and very strong. When he was past, for fear he might turn and come back, she closed her little book and slipped away. But her figure and her springing step were more unmistakable than she knew.

Next morning, on the same bench, she was reading breathlessly the scene between Gemma and Sanin at the window, when she heard Fiorsen's voice, behind her, say:

"Miss Winton!"

He, too, held a glass of the waters in one hand, and his hat in the other.

"I have just made your father's acquaintance. May I sit down a minute?"

Gyp drew to one side on the bench, and he sat down.

"What are you reading?"

"A story called 'Torrents of Spring.'"

"Ah, the finest ever written! Where are you?"

"Gemma and Sanin in the thunderstorm."

"Wait! You have Madame Polozov to come! What a creation! How old are you, Miss Winton?"

"Twenty-two."

"You would be too young to appreciate that story if you were not *you*. But you know much—by instinct. What is your Christian name—forgive me!"

"Ghita."

"Ghita? Not soft enough."

"I am always called Gyp."

"Gyp—ah, Gyp! Yes; Gyp!"

He repeated her name so impersonally that she could not be angry.

"I told your father I have had the pleasure of meeting you. He was very polite."

Gyp said coldly:

"My father is always polite."

"Like the ice in which they put champagne. I suppose they have told you that I am a *mauvais sujet*." Gyp inclined her head. He looked at her steadily, and said: "It is true. But I could be better—much."

She wanted to look at him, but could not, seized by a queer sort of exultation. This man had power; yet she had power over him. If she wished she could make him her slave, her dog, chain him to her. She had but to hold out her hand, and he would go on his knees to kiss it. She had but to say, "Come," and he would come from wherever he might be. She had but to say "Be good," and he would be good. It was her first experience of power; and it was intoxicating. But Gyp could never be self-confident for long; over her most victorious moments brooded the shadow of distrust; and as if he read her thought, Fiorsen said:

"Tell me to do something—anything; I will do it, Miss Winton."

"Then—go back to London at once. You are wasting yourself here, you know."

"You have asked me the one thing I can't do, Miss—Miss Gyp!"

"Please—not that; it's like a servant!"

"I *am* your servant!"

"Is that why you won't do what I ask you?"

"You are cruel."

Gyp laughed.

He said, with sudden fierceness:

"I am not going away from you; do not think it." Bending with the utmost swiftness, he took her hand, put his lips to it, and turned on his heel.

Gyp, uneasy and astonished, stared at her hand, still tingling from the pressure of his bristly moustache. Then she laughed again—it was just "foreign" to have your hand kissed—and went back to her book, but without taking in too many of its words.

Was ever courtship more strange than that which followed? Gyp never lost the sense of having the whip-hand, always felt like one giving alms, or extending favour, yet had a feeling of being unable to get away. The very strength of the spell she seemed to lay on him reacted on herself. Thoroughly sceptical at first, she could not remain so. He was too morose and unhappy if she did not smile on him, too alive and excited and grateful if she did. The change in his eyes from their ordinary restless, fierce, and furtive expression to humble adoration or wistful hunger when they looked at her, could never have been simulated. And she had no lack of chance to see that change. Then, too, wherever she went, there he was. If to a concert, he would be a few paces from the door, waiting for her entrance. If to a confectioner's for tea, as likely as not he would come in. Every afternoon he walked where she must pass, riding to the Neroberg.

Except in the gardens of the Kochbrunnen, when he would come up humbly and ask to sit with her for five minutes, he never forced his company, or tried in any way to compromise her. He must have had an instinct that it was dangerous with one so sensitive. There were other moths, too, round the candle, and they served to keep his attentions from being too conspicuous. Did she comprehend what was going on, understand how her defences

were being sapped, grasp the danger to retreat that lay in permitting him to hover? Not really. It all served to swell the triumphant intoxication of days when she was ever more and more in love with living, more and more conscious of being appreciated and admired, and of having power to do what others could not.

He excited her. Whatever else one might be in his moody, vivid company, one would not be dull. One morning, he told her something of his life. His father had been a small Swedish landowner, a very strong man and a very hard drinker; his mother, the daughter of a painter. She had taught him the violin, but died while he was still a boy. When he was seventeen he had quarrelled with his father, and had to play his violin for a living in the streets of Stockholm. A well-known violinist, hearing him one day, had taken him in hand. Then his father had drunk himself to death, and he had inherited the little estate. He had sold it at once—" for follies," as he put it crudely. " Ah! Miss Winton; I have committed many follies, but they are nothing to those I shall commit the day I do not see you any more!" And, with that disturbing remark, he got up and left her. She had smiled at his words, from scepticism, compassion, and some feeling she did not understand at all. In those days, she understood herself but little.

How far did Winton understand, how far see what was going on? In truth he had taken alarm. But he was afraid of showing disquiet by any dramatic change, or he would have carried her off a fortnight at least before his cure was over. He knew too well the signs of passion. That long, loping, wolfish fiddling fellow with the broad cheekbones and little side-whiskers (Good God!) and greenish eyes whose looks at Gyp he secretly marked, roused his complete distrust. Perhaps his inbred English contempt for foreigners and artists kept him from direct action. He *could* not take it quite seriously. Gyp, his fastidious perfect Gyp, succumbing, even a little, to a fellow like that! Never! Besides, she would surely con-

sult him in any doubt or difficulty. He forgot the sensitive secrecy of girls, forgot that his love for her had ever shunned words, her love for him never indulged in confidences. Besides he only saw a little of what there was to see, and that little was doctored by Fiorsen for his eyes, shrewd though they were. Nor was there in all so very much, except one episode the day before they left, of which he knew nothing.

That last afternoon was very still, a little mournful. It had rained the night before, and the soaked tree-trunks, the soaked fallen leaves, gave off a faint liquorice-like perfume. Gyp felt as if her spirit had been suddenly emptied of excitement and delight. And after lunch, when Winton was settling his accounts, she wandered out through the long park stretching up the valley. The sky was brooding-grey, the trees still and melancholy. All was a little melancholy, and she went on and on, across the stream, round into a muddy lane through the outskirts of a village, on to higher ground whence she could return by the main road. Why must things come to an end? For the first time in her life she thought of Mildenham and hunting without enthusiasm. She would rather stay in London. There she would not be cut off from music, from dancing, from people, and all the exhilaration of being appreciated. On the air came the shrilly, hollow droning of a thresher, and the sound seemed exactly to express her feelings. A pigeon flew over, white against the leaden sky; some birch-trees, already golden, shivered and let fall a shower of drops. It was lonely! And, suddenly, two little boys bolted out of the hedge, nearly upsetting her, and scurried down the road. Gyp, putting up her face to see, felt on it soft pin-points of rain. Her frock would be spoiled, one she was fond of—dove-coloured, velvety, not meant for weather. She turned for refuge to the birch-trees. It would be over directly, perhaps. Muffled in distance, the whining drone of that thresher still came travelling, deepening her discomfort. Then in the hedge, whence the boys had bolted down, a man reared himself above the

lane, and came striding along toward her. He jumped down the bank, among the birch-trees—Fiorsen—panting, dishevelled, pale with heat. He must have followed her, and climbed straight up from the path she had come along in the bottom, before crossing the stream. His artistic dandyism had been harshly treated by that scramble. He said, breathlessly:

"So you are going to-morrow, and never told me! You thought you would slip away—not a word for me! Are you always so cruel? Well, I will not spare you either!"

Crouching suddenly, he took hold of her broad ribbon sash, and buried his face in it. Gyp stood trembling. He circled her knees with his arms.

"Oh, Gyp, I love you—I love you—don't send me away—let me be with you! I am your dog—your slave. Oh, Gyp, I love you!"

His voice moved and terrified her. Men had said "I love you" several times during those last two years, but never with that lost-soul ring of passion, never with that look in the eyes, hungry and supplicating, never with that restless, eager, timid touch of hands. She could only murmur:

"Please get up!"

But he went on:

"Love me a little, only a little—love me! Oh, Gyp!"

The thought flashed through Gyp: "To how many has he knelt, I wonder?" His face had a kind of beauty in its abandonment—the beauty which comes from yearning—and she lost her frightened feeling. He went on, with his stammering murmur: "I am a prodigal, I know; but if you love me, I will no longer be I will do great things for you. Oh, Gyp, if you will some day marry me! Not now. When I have proved. Gyp—so sweet—so wonderful!"

His arms crept up till he had buried his face against her waist. Without quite knowing what she did, Gyp touched his hair, and said again:

"Now, please get up."

He got up and whispered:

"Have mercy! Speak to me!"

But she could only look into his face with her troubled, dark eyes. And suddenly she was seized and crushed to him. She shrank away, pushing him back with all her strength. He hung his head, abashed, with eyes shut, lips trembling. Her heart felt again that quiver of compassion, and she murmured:

"I don't know. I will tell you later—later—in England."

He bowed, folding his arms, as if to make her feel safe from him. And when, regardless of the rain, she began to move on, he walked beside her, a yard or so away, humbly, as though he had never hurt her lips with the violence of his kiss.

Back in her room, taking off her wet dress, Gyp tried to remember what he had said and what she had answered. She had not promised anything. But she had given him her address, both in London and the country. Unless she resolutely thought of other things, she still felt the restless touch of his hands, the grip of his arms, and saw his eyes as they were when he was kissing her; and once more she felt frightened and excited.

He was playing at the concert that evening—her last concert. And surely he had never played like that—with a despairing beauty, a sort of frenzied rapture. Listening, there came to her a feeling—a feeling of fatality—that, whether she would or no, she could not free herself from him.

V

Back in England, Gyp lost that feeling, or very nearly. Fiorsen would soon see someone else who seemed all he had said she was! Ridiculous to suppose that he would stop his follies for her, that she had any real power over him! But, deep down, she did not quite believe this.

Winton, who breathed again, hurried her off to Mildenham. He had bought her a new horse. They were in time for the last of the cubbing. And, for a week at least, the passion of riding and the sight of hounds carried all before it. Then, just as the real business of the season was beginning, she began to feel dull and restless. Mildenham was dark; the autumn winds made dreary noises. Her little brown spaniel, very old, died. She accused herself for having left it so long when it was failing. Thinking of all the days Lass had been watching for her to come home—as Betty, with that love of woeful recital dear to simple hearts, took good care to make quite plain—she felt as if she had been cruel. For events such as these, Gyp was both too tender-hearted and too hard on herself. She was quite ill for several days, and the moment she was better, Winton, in dismay, whisked her back to Aunt Rosamund, in town. He would lose her company, but if it did her good, took her out of herself, he would be content. Running up for the week-end, three days later, he was relieved to find her decidedly perked up, and left her again with the easier heart.

On the day after her father went back to Mildenham, Gyp received a letter from Fiorsen, forwarded from Bury Street. He was—it said—just returning to London; he had not forgotten any look she had ever given him, or any word she had spoken. He should not rest till he could see her again. "For a long time," the letter ended, "before I first saw you, I was like the dead—lost. I kiss your hands, and am your faithful slave—Gustav Fiorsen." These words, which from any other man would have excited her derision, renewed in Gyp that fluttered feeling,

the pleasurable, frightened sense of not being able to get away from his pursuit.

She wrote, in answer, that her aunt would be glad to see him if he cared to come in any afternoon between five and six, and signed herself "Ghita Winton." She was long over that little note, whose curt formality gave her satisfaction. Was she really mistress of herself—and him; able to dispose as she wished? Surely the note showed it.

It was never easy to tell Gyp's feelings from her face; even Winton was often baffled. Her preparation of Aunt Rosamund for the reception of Fiorsen was cleverly casual. And when he came, he seemed alive to the need for caution, only gazing at Gyp when he could not be seen doing so. But, going out, he whispered: "Not like this—not like this; I must see you alone—I must!" She smiled and shook her head. But bubbles had come back to the wine in her glass.

That evening she said quietly to Aunt Rosamund:

"Dad doesn't like Mr. Fiorsen—can't appreciate his playing, of course."

This discreet remark caused Aunt Rosamund, avid—in a well-bred way—of music, to omit mention of the intruder when writing to her brother. The next two weeks he came almost every day, bringing his violin. Gyp played his accompaniments, and though his hungry stare made her feel hot, she would have missed it.

But when Winton next came up to Bury Street, she was in a quandary. To confess that Fiorsen was here, having omitted to speak of him in her letters? Not to confess, and leave him to find it out from Aunt Rosamund? Seized with panic, she did neither, but told her father she was dying for a gallop. Hailing that as the best of signs, he took her forthwith back to Mildenham. Her feelings were curious—light-hearted, yet compunctious, as of one who escapes yet knows she will soon be seeking to return. The meet was rather far next day, but she insisted on riding to it, while old Pettance, the superannuated jockey,

employed as extra stable help at Mildenham, was to bring on her second horse. There was a good scenting-wind, with rain in the offing, and outside the covert Winton and she had a corner to themselves. They had slipped there, luckily unseen, for the astute were given to following the one-handed horseman in faded pink, who, on his bang-tailed black mare, had a knack of getting so well away. One of the whips, a little dark fellow with smouldery eyes and sucked-in weathered cheeks, dashed out of the covert, rode past, saluting, and dashed in again. A jay came out with a screech, dived, and doubled back; a hare made off across the fallow—its light-brown loping body barely visible against the brownish soil. Pigeons, very high up, flew over and away to the next wood. The shrilling voices of the whips rose from the covert-depths, and just a whimper now and then from the hounds, swiftly wheeling their noses among the fern and briers.

Gyp, crisping her fingers on the reins, drew in deep breaths. It smelled sweet and soft and fresh under that sky of blue and light-grey swift-moving clouds—not half the wind down here that there was up there, just enough to be carrying off the beech and oak leaves, loosened by frost two days before. If only a fox would break this side, and they could have the first fields to themselves, alone with hounds! One of these came trotting out, a pretty young creature, busy and unconcerned, raising its tan-and-white head, its mild reproachful deep-brown eyes, at Winton's "Loo-in, Trix!" A burst of music from the covert, and the hound doubled back among the briers.

Gyp's new brown horse was pricking its ears. A young man in a grey cutaway, buff cords, and jack-boots, on a low chestnut mare, came slipping round the covert. Did that mean they were all coming? Impatiently she glanced at this intruder, who raised his hat a little and smiled. The smile, faintly impudent, was infectious, and Gyp was melted to a slight response. Who was he? He looked serene and happy. She did not remember his face at all, yet there was something familiar about it—a broad face,

very well cut, and clean-shaved, with dark curly hair, extraordinarily clear eyes, a bold, cool, merry look. Where had she seen somebody like him?

A tiny sound from Winton made her turn her head. A fox was stealing out beyond those further bushes! She fixed her eyes on her father's face. It was hard as steel. Not a sound, not a quiver, as if horse and man had turned to metal. Was he never going to give the view-halloo? Then his lips writhed, and out it came. Gyp cast a swift smile of gratitude at the young man for having had the taste and sense to leave that to her father, and again he smiled at her. There came the first hounds streaming out —one after the other—music and feather! Why didn't Dad go?

Then the black mare slid past her, and, with a bound, her horse followed. The young man on the chestnut was away on the left. Only the huntsman and one whip—besides their three selves! The brown horse went too fast at the first fence and Winton called back: "Steady, Gyp! Steady him!" But she couldn't; and it didn't matter. Grass, three fields of grass! A lovely fox—going so straight! And each time the brown horse rose, she thought: 'Perfect! Oh, I am happy!' There was no feeling in the world like this, with a leader like Dad, hounds moving free, good going, and the field distanced. Better than dancing; better—yes, better than listening to music. If one could spend one's life galloping, sailing over fences! The new horse was a darling, though he *did* pull.

She crossed the next fence level with the young man, whose low chestnut had a very stealthy action. His hat was crammed down now, and his face close set, but his lips still had something of that smile. Gyp thought: 'He's got a good seat—very strong, only he looks like "thrusting." Nobody rides like Dad—so beautifully quiet!' Indeed, Winton's seat was perfection. The hounds swung round in a curve. Now she was with them, really with them! What a pace! No fox could stand this long!

And suddenly she caught sight of him, barely a field

ahead, scurrying desperately, brush down; and the thought flashed through her: 'Oh, don't let's catch you. Go on, fox; go on! Get away!' Were they really all after that little hunted red thing—a hundred great creatures, horses and men and women and dogs, after one little fox! But then came another fence, and quickly another, and she lost all feeling of shame and pity in the exultation of flying over them. A minute later the fox went to earth within a hundred yards of the leading hound, and she was glad. She had been in at deaths before—horrid! But it had been a lovely gallop. And, breathless, smiling rapturously, she wondered whether she could mop her face before the field came up, without that young man noticing.

She could see him talking to her father, and when she rode up, he raised his hat, and looking full at her said: "How you went!" His voice was rather high-pitched and pleasant and lazy. Gyp made him a little bow: "My new horse, you mean." And she kept thinking: 'Where *have* I seen someone like him?'

They had two more runs, but nothing like that first gallop. Nor did she again see the young man, whose name—it seemed—was Summerhay, son of a certain Lady Summerhay at Widrington, ten miles from Mildenham.

Silently jogging home with Winton in fading daylight, she felt very happy—saturated with air and elation. The trees and fields, the haystacks, gates, and ponds beside the lanes, grew dim; lights came up in the cottage windows; the air smelled sweet of wood smoke. And, for the first time all day, she thought of Fiorsen, thought of him almost longingly. If he could be there in the cosy old drawing-room, to play to her while she lay back—drowsing, dreaming by the fire in the scent of burning cedar logs—the Mozart minuet, or that little heart-catching tune of Poise, played the first time she heard him, or a dozen other of the things he played unaccompanied! That would be the most lovely ending to this lovely day. Just the glow and warmth wanting, to make all perfect—the glow and warmth of music and adoration!

And touching the mare with her heel, she sighed. To indulge fancies about music and Fiorsen was safe here, far away from him; she even thought she would not mind if he were to behave again as he had under the birch-trees in the rain at Wiesbaden. It was so good to be adored. Her old mare, ridden now six years, began the series of contented snuffles that signified home. Here was the last turn, and the loom of the short beech-tree avenue to the house—the old manor house, comfortable, roomy, rather dark, with wide shallow stairs. She was tired; and it was drizzling now. She would be stiff to-morrow. In the light coming from the open door she saw Markey standing; and while fishing from her pocket some lumps of sugar, heard him say: "Mr. Fiorsen, sir—gentleman from Wiesbaden—to see you."

Her heart thumped. What did this mean? Why had he come? How had he dared? How could he have been so treacherous to her? Ah, but he was ignorant, of course, that she had not told her father. Judgment was on her! She ran straight in and up the stairs. The voice of Betty, "Your bath's ready, Miss Gyp," roused her. And crying, "Oh, Betty darling, bring me up my tea!" she ran into the bathroom. She was safe there; and in the delicious heat of her bath could face the situation better.

There could be only one meaning. He had come to ask for her. And, suddenly, she took comfort. Better so; there would be no more secrecy from Dad! And he would stand between her and Fiorsen if—if she decided not to marry him. The thought staggered her. Had she, without knowing it, got so far as this? Yes, and further. Fiorsen would never accept refusal, even if she gave it! But, did she want to refuse?

She loved hot baths, but had never stayed in one so long. Life was so easy there, and so difficult outside. Betty's knock forced her to get out at last, and let her in with tea and the message: Would Miss Gyp please to go down when she was ready?

VI

With a glance at Gyp's vanishing figure, Winton had said curtly to Markey, "Where have you put this gentleman?" The use of the word "this" was the only trace he showed of his emotions. But on the little journey across the hall he entertained many extravagant thoughts. In the study, he inclined his head courteously enough, waiting for Fiorsen to speak. The "fiddler," still in his fur-lined coat, was twisting a squash hat in his hands. Why couldn't he look you in the face, or, if he did, why did he seem about to eat you?

"You knew I was returned to London, Major Winton?"

So Gyp had been seeing the fellow without letting him know! The thought was chill and bitter to Winton. He must not give her away, however, and he simply bowed. He felt that his visitor was afraid of his frigid courtesy; and he did not mean to help him over that fear.

Fiorsen, who had begun to pace the room, stopped, and said with agitation:

"Major Winton, your daughter is the most beautiful thing on earth. I love her desperately. I am a man with a future. I have what future I like in my art if only I can marry her. I have a little money, too; but in my violin there is all the fortune she can want."

Winton's face expressed nothing but cold contempt. That this fellow should take him for one who would consider money in connection with his daughter, simply affronted him.

Fiorsen went on:

"You do not like me. I saw it the first moment. You are an English gentleman"—he pronounced the words with irony—"I am nothing to you. Yet, in *my* world, I am something. I am not an adventurer. Will you permit me to beg your daughter to be my wife?" He raised his hands which held the hat till they assumed the attitude of prayer.

For a second, Winton realised that the man was suffering. But he said frigidly:

"I am obliged to you, sir, for coming to me first. I don't want to be discourteous in my own house, but I should be glad if you would be good enough to withdraw and take it that I shall certainly oppose your wish as best I can."

The almost childish disappointment and trouble in Fiorsen's face changed quickly to an expression fierce, furtive, mocking; and then shifted to despair.

"Major Winton, you have loved; you must have loved her mother. I suffer!"

Winton, who had turned to the fire, faced round again.

"I don't control my daughter's affections, sir; she will do as she wishes. I merely say it will be against my hopes and judgment if she marries you. I imagine you've not altogether waited for my leave. I was not blind to the way you hung about her at Wiesbaden, Mr. Fiorsen."

Fiorsen answered with a miserable smile:

"Poor wretches do what they can. May I see her? Let me just see her."

She had been seeing the fellow already without his knowledge, keeping from him—*him*—all her feelings, whatever they were. And he said:

"I'll send for her. In the meantime, perhaps you'll have some tea or whisky?"

Fiorsen shook his head, and there followed half an hour of the most acute discomfort. Winton, in his mud-stained clothes before the fire, supported it better than his visitor. That child of nature, after endeavouring to emulate his host's quietude, renounced such efforts with an expressive gesture, tramped the room, went to the window, drew aside the curtains and stared out into the dark; came back as if resolved again to confront Winton; then, baffled by that figure so motionless before the fire, flung himself down in an arm-chair, and turned his face to the wall. Winton was not cruel by nature, but he enjoyed the writhings of

this fellow who was endangering Gyp's happiness. Endangering? Surely she would not accept him! Yet, if not, why had she not told him? And he, too, suffered.

Then she came. Her smiling face had in it a kind of warning closeness. She went up to Fiorsen, and holding out her hand, said calmly:

"How nice of you to come!"

Winton had the bitter feeling that he—he—was the outsider. Well, he would speak plainly; there had been too much underhand doing.

"Mr. Fiorsen has done us the honour to wish to marry you. I've told him that you decide such things for yourself. If you accept him, it will be against my wish, naturally."

While he was speaking the glow deepened in her cheeks; she looked neither at him nor at Fiorsen. Winton noted the rise and fall of the lace on her breast. She gave the tiniest shrug of her shoulders. And, suddenly smitten to the heart, he walked stiffly to the door. It was evident that she had no use for his guidance. If her love for him was not worth to her more than this fellow! But he knew he could not afford wounded feelings; could not get on without her. Married to the greatest rascal on earth, he would still be standing by her, wanting her companionship and love. She represented too much in the present and—the past. With sore heart, indeed, he went to his room.

Fiorsen was gone when he came down to dinner. What the fellow had said, or she had answered, he would not for the world have asked. Gulfs between the proud are not lightly bridged. And, when she came up to say good-night, both their faces were as though coated with wax.

In the days that followed she gave no sign, uttered no word in any way suggesting that she meant to go against his wishes. Fiorsen might not have existed, for any mention made of him. But Winton knew well that she was moping, and cherishing some feeling against himself. One evening, after dinner, he said quietly:

"Tell me frankly, Gyp; do you care for that chap?"

She answered as quietly:

"In a way—yes."

"Is that enough?"

"I don't know, Dad."

Her lips had quivered; and Winton's heart softened, as it always did when he saw her moved. He put his hand out, covered one of hers, and said:

"I shall never stand in the way of your happiness, Gyp. But it must *be* happiness. Can it possibly be that? I don't think so. You know what they said of him out there?"

"Yes."

He had not thought she knew. And his heart sank.

"That's pretty bad, you know. And he's not of our world at all?"

Gyp looked up.

"Do you think *I* belong to 'our world,' Dad?"

Winton turned away. She followed, slipping her hand under his arm.

"I didn't mean to hurt. But it's true, isn't it? I don't belong among society people. Ever since you told me I've felt I don't belong to them. I'm nearer him. Music means more to me than anything!"

Winton gave her hand a convulsive grip.

"If your happiness went wrong, Gyp, I should be most awfully cut up."

"But why shouldn't I be happy, Dad?"

"If you were, I could put up with anyone. But I can't believe you would be. I beg you, my dear—for God's sake, make sure. I'll put a bullet into the man who treats you badly."

At bedtime he said:

"We'll go up to town to-morrow."

Whether from a feeling of the inevitable, or from the forlorn hope that seeing more of the fellow might be the only chance of curing her—he put no more obstacles in the way.

And the queer courtship began again. By Christmas she had consented, still under the impression that she was the mistress, not the slave—the cat, not the bird. Once or twice, when Fiorsen let passion out of hand and his overbold caresses affronted her, she recoiled almost with dread from what she was going towards. But, in general, she lived elated, intoxicated by music and his adoration, yet remorseful that she was making her father sad. She was but little at Mildenham, and he, in his unhappiness, was there nearly all the time, riding extra hard, and leaving Gyp with his sister. Aunt Rosamund, though under the spell of Fiorsen's music, had agreed with her brother that Fiorsen was "impossible." But nothing she said made any effect on Gyp. It was new and startling to discover in the soft, sensitive girl such a vein of stubbornness. Opposition seemed to harden her resolution. And the good lady's natural optimism began to persuade her that Gyp would make a silk purse out of that sow's ear yet. After all, the man was a celebrity in his way!

It was settled for February. A house with a garden was taken in St. John's Wood. The last month went, as all such last months go, in those intoxicating pastimes, the buying of furniture and clothes. If it were not for that, who knows how many engagement knots would slip!

And to-day they had been married. To the last Winton had hardly believed it would come to that. He had shaken the hand of her husband and kept pain and disappointment out of his face, knowing well that he deceived no one. Thank heaven, there had been no church, no wedding-cake, invitations, congratulations, fal-lals of any kind—he could never have stood them. Not even Rosamund—who had influenza—to put up with!

Lying back in the recesses of that old chair, he stared into the fire.

They would be just about at Torquay by now—just about. Music! Who would have thought noises made

out of string and wood could have stolen her away from him? Yes, they would be at Torquay by now, at their hotel. And the first prayer Winton had uttered for years escaped his lips:

"Let her be happy! Let her be happy!"

Then, hearing Markey open the door, he closed his eyes and feigned sleep.

PART II

I

Gyp thought of her frock, a mushroom-coloured velvet cord. Not many girls in her class are married without "fal-lals," as Winton had called them. Not many girls sit in the corner of their reserved first-class compartments without the excitement of having been supreme centre of the world for some flattering hours to buoy them up on that train journey, with no memories of friends' behaviour, speech, appearance, to chat of with her husband, so as to keep thought away. For Gyp, her dress, first worn that day, Betty's breakdown, the faces, blank as hats, of the registrar and clerk, were all she had to distract her. She stole a look at him, clothed in blue serge, just opposite. Her husband! Mrs. Gustav Fiorsen! People might call her that; but to herself, she was Ghita Winton. The other would never seem right. And, not confessing that she was afraid to meet his eyes, yet afraid, she looked out of the window. A bleak, dismal day; no warmth, no sun, no music—the Thames grey as lead, the willows on its banks forlorn.

Suddenly she felt his hand on hers. She had not seen his face like that before—save once or twice when he was playing—a spirit shining through. She felt suddenly secure. If it stayed like that, then!—— His hand rested on her knee; his face changed just a little; the spirit seemed to waver, to be fading; his lips grew fuller. He crossed over and sat beside her. She was tremulously glad of the corridor outside, and instantly began to talk about their house. In the hours they had spent together, up to now, he had been like a starved man snatching hasty meals; now that he had her to himself for good, he was another creature—a boy out of school.

He got down his practice violin, and putting on the mute, played. And when his face was turned away, she looked at him. He was much better-looking now than when he had his little whiskers. One day she had touched one and said: "If only these wings could fly!" Next

morning they had flown. But she was not used to his face even yet, any more than to his touch.

At Torquay the sky was clear and starry; the wind brought whiffs of sea-scent into their cab; lights winked far out on a headland; and in the little harbour, all bluish dark, many small boats floated like tame birds. When the cab stopped and they entered the hall of the hotel, she whispered:

"Don't let them see!"

He answered with a laugh:

"They shan't see—my Gyp. Oh, they shan't see! We are old married people, tired of each other—very!"

At dinner it amused him at first—her too, a little—to keep up this farce of indifference. But every now and then he turned and stared at some inoffensive visitor who was taking interest in them, with such fierce and genuine contempt, that Gyp took alarm. When she had drunk a little wine and he had drunk a good deal, the farce of indifference came to its end. He talked at a great rate, nicknaming the waiters, mimicking the people around—thrusts which made her smile but shiver, lest they should be heard or seen. Their heads were close together across the little table. They went out into the lounge. He wanted her to smoke with him. She had never smoked in a public room. But it seemed stiff and "missish" to refuse—she must do now as his world did. She drew back a window-curtain, and they stood there side by side. The sea was deep blue beneath bright stars, and the moon shone through a ragged pine-tree on a little headland. Though she stood five feet six in her shoes, she was only up to his mouth. He sighed and said: "Beautiful night, my Gyp!" And suddenly it struck her that she knew nothing of what was in him, and yet he was her husband! "Husband"—funny word, not pretty! She felt as a child opening the door of a dark room, and, clutching his arm, said:

"Look! There's a sailing-boat. What's it doing out there at night?"

Up in their sitting-room was a piano, but—not possible; to-morrow they would have to get another. To-morrow! The fire was hot, and he took off his coat to play. In one of his shirt-sleeves was a rent. She thought, with a sort of triumph: "I shall mend that!" It was something definite, actual. There were lilies in the room which gave a strong, sweet scent. For a whole hour he played, and Gyp, in her cream-coloured frock, lay back, listening. She was tired, not sleepy. It would have been nice to have been sleepy. Her mouth had its little sad tuck or dimple at the corner; her eyes were deep and dark—a cloudy child; and his gaze never left her face. At last he put away the violin.

"Go to bed, Gyp; you're tired."

Obediently she got up and went into the bedroom. With a sick feeling in her heart, and as near the fire as she could get, she undressed with desperate haste, and got to bed. She lay there shivering in her flimsy lawn against the cold sheets, her eyes not quite closed, watching the flicker of the firelight. She did not think—just lay still. The door creaked. She shut her eyes. Had she a heart at all? It did not seem to beat. She lay with eyes shut, till she could bear it no longer. By the firelight she saw him crouching at the foot of the bed; could just see his face—like a face—a face—where seen? Ah yes!—a picture—of a wild man crouching at the feet of Iphigenia—so humble, so hungry—so lost in gazing. She gave a little smothered sob and held out her hand.

II

Gyp was too proud to give by halves. And in those early days she gave Fiorsen everything except—her heart. She earnestly desired to give that too; but hearts only give themselves. Perhaps if the wild man in him, maddened by beauty in its power, had not so ousted the spirit man, her heart might have gone with her lips. He knew he was not getting her heart, and it made him, in the wildness of his nature and the perversity of a man, go just the wrong way to work, trying to conquer her by the senses, not the soul.

Yet she was not unhappy, except for a sort of lost feeling sometimes, as if she were trying to grasp something that kept slipping away. When he was playing, with the spirit-look on his face, she would feel: 'Now, now, surely I shall get close to him!' But the look would go; how to keep it there she did not know, and when it went, her feeling went too.

Their little suite of rooms was at the very end of the hotel, so that he might play as much as he wished. While he practised in the mornings she would go into the garden, which sloped in rock-terraces down to the sea. Wrapped in fur, she would sit there with a book. She soon knew each evergreen, or flower—aubretia, and laurustinus, a little white flower whose name was uncertain, and one star-periwinkle. The air was often soft; the birds sang already and were busy with their weddings, and twice, at least, spring came in her heart—that feeling when first the being scents new life preparing in the earth and the wind—the feeling which only comes when spring is not yet. Seagulls often came over her, craning down their greedy bills and uttering cries like a kitten's mewing.

She did not realise how she had grown up in these few days, how the ground bass had already come into the light music of her life. Living with Fiorsen was opening her eyes to much besides knowledge of "man's nature"; her, perhaps fatal, receptivity was already soaking up the atmo-

sphere of his philosophy. He was always in revolt against accepting things because he was expected to; but, like most executant artists, he was no reasoner, just a mere instinctive kicker against the pricks. He would lose himself in a sunset, a scent, a tune, a new caress, in a rush of pity for a beggar or a blind man, a rush of aversion from a man with large feet or a long nose, of hatred for a woman with a flat chest or an expression of sanctimony. He would swing along when he was walking, or dawdle, dawdle; he would sing and laugh, and make her laugh too till she ached, and half an hour later would sit staring into some pit of darkness in a sort of powerful brooding of his whole being. Insensibly she shared in this deep drinking of sensation, but always gracefully, fastidiously, never losing sense of other people's feelings.

In his love-raptures he just avoided setting her nerves on edge, because he never failed to make her feel his adoration of her beauty; that perpetual consciousness, too, of not belonging to the proper and respectable, which she had tried to explain to her father, set her against feeling shocked. But in other ways he did shock her. She could not get used to his oblivion of people's feelings, to the ferocious contempt with which he would look at those who got on his nerves, and make half-audible comments, just as he had commented on her own father when he and Count Rosek passed them, by the Schiller statue. She would visibly shrink at those remarks, though they were sometimes so funny that she had to laugh. She saw that he resented her shrinking; but it seemed to excite him to run amuck the more. Once she got up and walked away. He followed, sat on the floor beside her knees, and, like a great cat, thrust his head under her hand.

"Forgive me, my Gyp; but they are such brutes. Who could help it? Now tell me—who could, except my Gyp?" And she had to forgive him. But, one evening, when he had been really outrageous during dinner, she answered:

"No; I can't. It's you that are the brute."

He leaped up with a face of furious gloom and went out of the room. It was the first time he had given way to anger with her. Gyp sat by the fire, very disturbed; chiefly because she was not really upset at having hurt him. Surely she ought to be feeling miserable at that!

But when, at ten o'clock, he had not come back, she began to flutter. She had said a dreadful thing! Though, in her heart, she did not take back her judgment. This was the first time she had given free rein to her feeling against what Winton would have called his "bounderism." If he had been English, she would never have been attracted by one who could trample so on other people's feelings. What, then, had attracted her? His strangeness, wildness, the mesmeric pull of his passion for her, his music! Nothing could spoil that in him. The sweep, the surge, and sigh in his playing was like the sea out there, dark, and surf-edged, beating on the rocks; or the sea deep-coloured in daylight, with white gulls over it; or the sea with those sinuous paths made by the wandering currents, the subtle, smiling, silent sea, holding in suspense an unfathomable restlessness, waiting to surge and spring again. That was what she wanted from him—not his embraces, not even his adoration, his wit, or his queer, lithe comeliness touched with felinity; no, only that in his soul which escaped through his fingers into the air and dragged at her soul. If, when he came in, she were to run to him, throw her arms round his neck, make herself feel close, lose herself in him! Why not? It was her duty; why not her delight, too? But she shivered. Some instinct too deep for analysis, something in the very heart of her nerves, made her recoil, as if she were afraid, literally scared of letting herself go, of loving—the subtlest instinct of self-preservation against something fatal; against being led on beyond—a curious, instinctive sinking, such as some feel at the sight of a precipice, a dread of going near, lest they be drawn on and over by resistless attraction.

She passed into their bedroom. To go to bed without

knowing where he was, what doing, thinking, seemed already a little odd; and she sat brushing her hair slowly with the silver-backed brushes, staring at her own pale face, whose eyes looked so very large and dark. At last there came to her the feeling: 'I can't help it! I don't care!' And getting into bed, she turned out the light. It seemed queer and lonely; there was no fire. And then, without more ado, she slept.

She had a dream of being between Fiorsen and her father in a railway-carriage out at sea, with the water rising higher and higher, swishing and sighing. Awakening always, like a dog, to perfect presence of mind, she knew that he was playing in the sitting-room, playing—at what time of night? She lay listening to the quivering, gibbering tune. Twice she half slipped out of bed, but both times, as if fate meant her not to move, he chose that moment to swell out the sound, and each time she thought: 'No, I can't. It's just the same now; he doesn't care how many people he wakes up. He does just what he likes, and cares nothing for anyone.' And covering her ears with her hands, she continued to lie motionless.

When she withdrew her hands at last, he had stopped. Then she heard him coming, and feigned sleep. Next morning he seemed to have forgotten it all. But Gyp had not. She wanted badly to know what he had felt, where he had gone, but was too proud to ask.

She wrote twice to her father in the first week, but not afterwards, except for a postcard now and then. Why tell him what she was doing, in the company of one whom he could not bear to think of? Had he been right? To confess that would hurt her pride too much. But she began to long for London. Her new house was a green spot to dwell on. When they were settled in, and could do what they liked without anxiety about people's feelings, it would be all right perhaps. He would start again really working, she helping him, and all would be different. Her new house, her new garden, the fruit-trees coming into blossom! She would have dogs and cats, would ride

when Dad was in Town. Aunt Rosamund would come, friends, evenings of music, dances still, perhaps—he danced beautifully. And his concerts—the elation of being identified with his success! Above all, the excitement of making her home as dainty as she could, with daring experiments in form and colour. And yet, at heart she knew that to be already looking forward was a bad sign.

One thing, at all events, she enjoyed—sailing. They had blue days when even the March sun was warm, and there was just breeze enough. He got on excellently well with the "old salt" whose boat they used, for he was at his best with simple folk.

In those hours Gyp had some real sensations of romance. The sea was blue, the rocks and wooded spurs of that Southern coast dreamy in the bright land-haze. Oblivious of the "old salt," he would put his arm round her; and she would be grateful for feeling nearer to him in spirit. She made loyal efforts to understand him in these weeks that were bringing a certain disillusionment. The elemental part of marriage was not the trouble; if she did not herself feel passion, she did not resent his. The trouble lay deeper—the sense of an insuperable barrier; and always that instinctive recoil from letting herself go. She could not let herself be known, and she could not get to know him. Why did his eyes often fix her with a stare that did not seem to see her? What made him, in the midst of serious playing, break into some furious or desolate little tune, or drop his violin? What gave him those long hours of dejection, following the maddest gaiety? Above all, what dreams had he in those rare moments when music transformed his strange pale face? Or was it a mere physical illusion—had he any dreams? "The heart of another is a dark forest"—to all but the one who loves.

One morning he held up a letter.

"Ah, ha! Paul Rosek went to see our house. 'A pretty dove's nest!' he calls it."

The memory of his friend's sphinxlike, sweetish face,

and eyes which seemed to know so many secrets, always affected Gyp unpleasantly. She said quietly:

"Why do you like him, Gustav?"

"Oh, he is useful. A good judge of music, and—many things."

"I think he is hateful."

Fiorsen laughed.

"Why hateful, my Gyp? He is a good friend. And he admires you—oh, he admires you very much! *Il dit qu'il a une technique merveilleuse* with women."

Gyp laughed.

"He's like a toad, I think."

"Ah, I shall tell him that! He will be flattered."

"If you do, I——"

He jumped up and caught her in his arms; his face was so comically compunctious that she calmed down at once. She thought over her words afterwards and regretted them. All the same, Rosek was a sneak and a cold sensualist, she was sure. And the thought that he had been spying at their little house tarnished her thoughts of it.

They went to Town three days later. While the taxi was skirting Lord's Cricket Ground, Gyp slipped her hand into Fiorsen's. She was brimful of excitement. The trees were budding in the gardens, the almond-blossom coming! Now they were in the road. Five, seven, nine—thirteen! Two more! There it was, nineteen, in white figures on the leaf-green railings, under the small green lilac buds; and their almond-blossom was out, too! She could just see, over those tall railings, the low white house with its green outside shutters. She jumped out almost into the arms of Betty, who stood smiling all over her broad, flushed face, while from under each arm peered forth a little black head, with pricked ears and eyes as bright as diamonds.

"Betty! What darlings!"

"Major Winton's present, my dear—ma'am!"

Giving the stout shoulders a hug, Gyp seized the Scotch terriers and ran up the path under the trellis, while the

pups, squeezed against her breast, made confused small noises and licked her nose and ears. Through the square hall she ran into the drawing-room, which opened out on to the lawn; and there, in the French window, stood, spying back at the spick-and-span room, where everything was placed just wrong. The colouring, white, ebony, and satinwood, looked nicer even than she had hoped. Out in the garden—her own garden—the pear-trees were thickening, but not in blossom yet; a few daffodils were in bloom along the walls, and a magnolia had one bud opened. And all the time she kept squeezing the puppies to her, enjoying their young, warm, fluffy savour. She ran out of the drawing-room, up the stairs. Oh, it was nice to be in your own place, to be—— Suddenly she felt herself lifted off the ground from behind, and in that undignified position, her eyes flying, she turned her face till he could reach her lips.

III

That first morning in her new house, Gyp woke with the sparrow, or whatever the bird which utters the first cheeps and twitters, soon eclipsed by so much that was more important in bird-song. All the feathered creatures in London seemed assembled in her garden; and the old verse came into her head:

> "*All dear Nature's children sweet*
> *Lie at bride and bridegroom's feet,*
> *Blessing their sense.*
> *Not a creature of the air,*
> *Bird melodious or bird fair,*
> *Be absent hence!*"

She turned and looked at Fiorsen. He lay with his head snoozled down into the pillow, so that she could only see his thick, rumpled hair. And a shiver went through her, exactly as if a strange man were lying there. Did he really belong to her, she to him—for good? Was this their house—together? It all seemed different, more serious and troubling, in this strange permanent bed, of this strange permanent room. Careful not to wake him, she slipped out and stood between the curtains and the window. Light was in confusion yet; away low down behind the trees, the rose of dawn still clung. One might almost have been in the country, but for the faint, rumorous noises of the town beginning to wake, and that film of ground-mist which veils the feet of London mornings. She was mistress in this house, had to direct it all—see to everything! And her pups! What did they eat?

That was the first of many hours of conscientious anxiety. Her fastidiousness desired perfection, but her sensitiveness refused to demand it of others—especially servants. Why should she harry them?

Fiorsen had not the faintest notion of regularity. He could not even begin to appreciate her struggles in house-

keeping. And she was too proud to ask his help, or perhaps too wise, since he was obviously unfit to give it. To live like the birds of the air was his motto. Gyp would have liked nothing better; but it was difficult in a house with three servants, several meals, two puppy-dogs, and no great experience of how to deal with any of them.

She spoke of her difficulties to no one. With Betty—who, bone-conservative, admitted Fiorsen as hardly as she had once admitted Winton—she had to be very careful. But her great trouble was with her father. She longed to see him, and literally dreaded the meeting. He first came—as he had been wont to come when she was a tiny girl—at the hour when he thought the fellow to whom she now belonged would most probably be out. She opened the door herself, and hung about him so that his shrewd eyes should not see her face. And she began at once to talk of the puppies, whom she had named Don and Doff. They were perfect darlings; nothing was safe from them; her slippers were completely done for; they had already got into her china cabinet and gone to sleep there! He must come and see all over.

Talking all the time, she took him upstairs and down, out into the garden, to the studio, or music-room, at the end, which had an entrance to itself on to a back lane. This room had been the great attraction. Fiorsen could practise there in peace. Winton went with her very quietly, making a shrewd comment now and then. At the far end of the garden, looking over the wall, down into that narrow passage which lay between it and the back of another garden, he squeezed her arm suddenly.

"Well, Gyp, what sort of a time?"

"Oh, rather lovely—in some ways." But she did not look at him, nor he at her. "See, Dad! The cats have made quite a path there!"

Winton bit his lips and turned from the wall. The thought of that fellow was bitter within him. She meant to tell him nothing, meant to keep up that light-hearted look—which didn't deceive him!

"Look at my crocuses! It's really spring to-day!"

Even a bee or two had come. The tiny leaves had a transparent look, too thin as yet to keep the sunlight from passing through them. The purple, delicate-veined crocuses, with little flames of orange blowing from their centres, seemed to hold the light as in cups. A wind, without harshness, swung the boughs; a dry leaf or two still rustled round here and there. And on the grass, and in the blue sky, and on the almond-blossom was the first spring brilliance. Gyp clasped her hands.

"Lovely—to feel the spring!"

And Winton thought: 'She's changed!' She had softened, quickened—more depth of colour in her, more gravity, more sway in her body, more sweetness in her smile. But—was she happy?

A voice said:

"Ah, what a pleasure!"

The fellow had slunk up like the great cat he was. And it seemed to Winton that Gyp had winced.

"Dad thinks we ought to have dark curtains in the music-room, Gustav."

Fiorsen made a bow.

"Yes—yes—like a London club."

Winton, watching, was sure of supplication in her face. And, forcing a smile, he said:

"You seem very snug here. Glad to see you again. Gyp looks splendid."

Another of those bows he so detested! Mountebank! Never, never, would he be able to stand the fellow! But he must not, would not, show it. And, as soon as he decently could, he went, picking his way back through this region, of which his knowledge was almost limited to Lord's Cricket Ground, in doubt and desolation, with the resolve to be always at hand if the child wanted him.

He had not been gone ten minutes before Aunt Rosamund appeared, with a crutch-handled stick and a gentlemanly limp, for she, too, suffered from gout. The good

lady had not known how fond she was of her niece till the girl had slipped off into this marriage. She wanted her back, to go about with and make much of, as before. And her drawl did not quite disguise this feeling.

Gyp could detect Fiorsen subtly mimicking that drawl; and her ears began to burn. The puppies, their points, noses, boldness, and food, held the danger in abeyance for some minutes. Then the mimicry began again. When Aunt Rosamund had taken a somewhat sudden leave, Gyp stood at the window of her drawing-room with the mask off her face. Fiorsen came up, put his arm round her, and said with a fierce sigh:

"Are they coming often—these excellent people?"

Gyp drew back.

"If you love me, why do you try to hurt the people who love me too?"

"Because I am jealous. I am jealous even of those puppies."

"And shall you try to hurt them?"

"If I see them too much near you."

"Do you think I can be happy if you hurt things because they love me?"

The first time—the very first friend to come into her new home! It was too much!

Fiorsen said hoarsely:

"You do not love me. If you loved me, I should feel it through your lips. I should see it in your eyes. Oh, love me, Gyp! You shall!"

But to say to Love: "Stand and deliver!" seemed to her mere ill-bred stupidity. She froze against him in soul. When a woman refuses nothing to one whom she does not really love, shadows are already falling on the bride-house. And Fiorsen knew it; but his self-control scarcely equalled that of the two puppies.

Yet, on the whole, these first weeks in her new home were too busy to allow much room for doubting or regret. Several important concerts were fixed for May. She looked forward to these with intense eagerness, and pushed

everything that interfered with preparation into the background. As though to make up for that instinctive recoil from giving him her heart, of which she was always subconscious, she gave him all her activities, without calculation or reserve. She was ready to play for him all day and every day. But she had some free hours in the morning, for he lay in bed till eleven, and was never ready for practice before twelve. In those early hours she got through her orders and her shopping—to so many women the only real "sport"—a chase of the ideal; a pitting of taste and knowledge against that of the world at large; a secret passion for making themselves more beautiful. Gyp never went shopping without a faint thrill running up and down her nerves. She hated to be touched by strange fingers, but not even that stopped her pleasure in turning and turning before long mirrors, while the saleswoman ran the tips of fingers over her, smoothing and pinning, and uttering the word "moddam."

On other mornings, she rode with her father. One day, after riding in Richmond Park, they had late breakfast on the verandah of an hotel. Some fruit-trees were still in blossom just below them, and the sunlight brightened to silver the windings of the river, and to gold the budding leaves of the oak-trees. Winton, smoking his after-breakfast cigar, stared down across the tops of those trees towards the river; and stealing a glance at him, Gyp said softly:

"Did you ever ride with my mother, Dad?"

"Once—the very ride we've been to-day. She was on a black mare; I had a chestnut——" In that grove on the little hill through which they had ridden that morning, he had dismounted and stood beside her!

Gyp stretched her hand across the table.

"Tell me about her. Was she beautiful?"

"Yes."

"Dark? Tall?"

"Very like you, Gyp. A little—a little"—he did not know how to describe that difference—"a little more

foreign-looking, perhaps. One of her grandmothers was Italian, you know."

"How did you come to love her? Suddenly?"

"As suddenly as"—he drew his hand away and laid it on the verandah rail—"that sun came on my hand."

Gyp said, as if to herself:

"Yes; I don't think I understand that—yet. Did she love you at first sight, too?"

"One easily believes what one wants to—but she used to say so."

"And how long?"

"Only a year."

"Oh, Dad! I can't bear to think I killed her—I can't bear it!"

Winton got up, and a startled blackbird ceased his song. Gyp went on in a hard voice:

"I don't want to have any children. And I don't—I don't want to love like that. I should be afraid."

Winton looked at her, frowning over his past.

"Love," he said, "it catches you, and you're gone. When it comes, you welcome it, whether it's to kill you or not."

When she got home it was not quite noon. She hurried over her bath and dressing, and ran out to the music-room. Its walls had been hung with Willesden scrim and gilded; the curtains were silver-grey; there was a divan covered with silver-and-gold stuff, and a beaten brass fireplace. It was a study in silver and gold, save for two touches of fantasy—a screen round the piano-head, covered with brilliantly painted peacocks' tails, and a blue Persian vase, in which were flowers of various hues of red.

Fiorsen was standing at the window, smoking. He did not turn. Gyp put her hand within his arm.

"So sorry. But it's only just half-past twelve."

His face was as if the whole world had injured him.

"Pity you came back! Very nice, riding, I'm sure!"

Could she not go riding with her own father? What insensate jealousy and egomania! And, without a word,

she sat down at the piano. She was not good at standing injustice—and he smelled of brandy! Drink in the morning was ugly—horrid! She sat at the piano, waiting. He would be like this till he had played away the fumes of his ill mood, and then he would come and paw her shoulders and put his lips to her neck. It was not the way to behave, not the way to make her love him. And she said suddenly:

"Gustav; what exactly have I done that you dislike?"

"You have had a father."

Gyp began to laugh. He looked so like a sulky child, standing there. He turned swiftly on her and clapped his hand over her mouth. She looked up over that hand. Her heart was doing the *grand écart* within her, this way in compunction, that way in resentment. His eyes fell before hers; he removed his hand.

"Well, shall we begin?" she said.

He answered roughly: "No," and went out into the garden.

Was it possible that she could have taken part in such a horrid little scene? She remained sitting at the piano, playing over and over a single passage, without heeding what it was.

IV

So far, they had seen nothing of Rosek. She wondered if Fiorsen had passed on to him her remark, but did not ask; having learned that her husband spoke the truth when convenient, not when it caused him pain. About music, or art, however, he could be implicitly relied on; and his frankness was appalling when his nerves were ruffled.

At the first concert she saw Rosek's unwelcome figure on the other side of the gangway, two rows back. He was talking to a young girl, whose face, short and beautifully formed, had the opaque transparency of alabaster. With her round blue eyes fixed on him, and her lips just parted, she had a slightly vacant look. Her laugh, too, was just a little vacant. And yet her features were so beautiful, her hair so smooth and fair, her colouring so pale and fine, her neck so white and round, the poise of her body so perfect, that Gyp found it difficult to take her glance away. She was sitting alone, wanting so much to feel again the sensations of Wiesbaden. There would be a kind of solemn pleasure in knowing that she had helped to fashion sounds which moved so many listeners. She had looked forward to this concert eagerly. And she sat, abstracted from consciousness of those about her, soft and still.

Fiorsen looked his worst, as ever, when first coming before an audience—cold, furtive, defensive, defiant, half turned away, with those long fingers tightening the screws, touching the strings. Wiesbaden! No; this was not like Wiesbaden! And when he played, she had not the same emotions. She had heard him now too often, knew too exactly how he produced those sounds; knew that their fire and sweetness and nobility sprang from fingers, ear, brain—not from his soul. Nor was it possible any longer to drift off on those currents of sound into new worlds, to hear bells at dawn, and the dews of evening as they fell, to feel the freshness of wind and the fire of sunlight. Romance and ecstasy came no more. She was watching

for the weak spots, the passages with which he had struggled and she had struggled; she was distracted by memories of petulance, black moods, and sudden caresses. And then she caught his eye. The look was like, yet now unlike, those looks at Wiesbaden. It had lost the adoration. And she thought: 'Is it my fault, or is it only because he has me now to do what he likes with?' It was all another disillusionment, perhaps the greatest yet. But she kindled at the applause, and lost herself in the pleasure of his success. At the interval, she went round to the artists' room. He was coming down from his last recall; his look of bored contempt vanished, and, lifting her hand, he kissed it. She whispered:

"Beautiful!"

And he whispered back:

"Do you love me, Gyp?"

She nodded. And at that moment she thought she did.

Then people began to come; amongst them her old music-master, Monsieur Harmost, who, after a "*Merveilleux, très fort*" to Fiorsen, turned his back on him to talk to Gyp.

So she had married Fiorsen. That was extraordinary, but extraordinary! And what was it like—a little funny—not so? Her music would be spoiled now—what a pity! No? She must come to him, then; yes, come again. All the time he patted her arm, as if playing the piano, and his fingers felt the firmness of her flesh, as though debating whether she were letting it deteriorate. He seemed really to have missed his old pupil, to be glad at seeing her again; and Gyp never could withstand appreciation. More people came. She saw Rosek talking to her husband, and the alabaster girl standing silent, her lips still parted, gazing at Fiorsen. A perfect figure, rather short; a dovelike face, whose exquisitely shaped, just opened lips seemed to be demanding sugar-plums. Not more than nineteen—who was she?

A voice said:

"How do you do, Mrs. Fiorsen? I am fortunate to see you again at last."

If Gustav had given her away, one would never know it from this masked creature, Rosek, with his suave watchful composure, who talked so smoothly. What did she so dislike in him? Gyp had acute instincts, the natural intelligence of a nature not over-intellectual, whose "feelers" were too delicate to be deceived.

Following his glance, she saw her husband talking to the girl, whose lips semed more than ever asking for sugar-plums.

"Do you admire her, Madame—that young dancer, Daphne Wing—she will make a name. A dove flying!"

"She's very pretty—I can imagine her dancing beautifully."

"Come one day and see her? She has still to make her *début*."

Gyp answered:

"Thank you."

But she thought: 'I don't want to have anything to do with you! Why didn't I say I hate dancing?'

A bell sounded; people began hurrying away. The girl came up.

"Miss Daphne Wing—Mrs. Fiorsen."

Gyp put out her hand with a smile. Miss Daphne Wing smiled, too, and said, with the intonation of those whose accents have been carefully corrected:

"Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen, how beautifully your husband plays—doesn't he?"

Not merely at the careful speech, but at something lacking when the mouth moved, Gyp felt sorry, as at blight on a perfect flower. With a nod, she turned to Fiorsen, now waiting to go on to the platform. Was it at her or at the girl he had been looking? In the corridor, Rosek said:

"Come with Gustav to my rooms to-day. She shall dance for us. She admires you, Madame."

Gyp longed for the simple brutality to say: "I don't want to come." But all she could manage was:

"Thank you. I'll ask Gustav."

Once back in her seat, she rubbed the cheek his breath had touched. A girl was singing now—one of those faces Gyp always admired, reddish-gold hair, blue eyes—the antithesis of herself—and the song was "The Bens of Jura," that strange outpouring from a heart broken by love:

"*And my heart reft of its own sun*——"

The shiver of some very deep response passed through her. Dad had said: "Love catches you, and you're gone!"

No! she, who was the result of love like that, did not want to love!

The girl finished. There was little applause. She had sung beautifully one of the most wonderful songs in the world—was it too tragic, too painful, too strange—not "pretty" enough? Gyp felt sorry for her. She would have liked to slip away. But she had not the needful rudeness. She would have to wait, and go through with this evening at Rosek's. She had entered of her own free will on a life which would not give her a feeling of anchorage or home. Of her own accord she had stepped into the cage!

On the way to Rosek's, she disguised from Fiorsen her headache and depression. He was in one of his boy-out-of-school moods, elated by applause, mimicking her old master, the idolatries of his worshippers, Rosek, the girl dancer's upturned lips. And he slipped his arm round Gyp in the cab, crushing her against him and sniffing at her cheek as if she had been a flower.

Rosek had the first floor of an old mansion in Russell Square. Incense, or some kindred perfume, was at once about one; and, on the walls of the dark hall, electric light burned, in jars of alabaster picked up in the East. The place was a sanctum of the collector's spirit. Its owner had a passion for black—the walls, divans, picture-

frames, even some of the tilings were black, with glimmerings of gold, ivory, and moonlight. On a round black table was a golden bowl filled with moonlight-coloured "honesty"; on a black wall gleamed the ivory mask of a faun's face; from a dark niche the little silver figure of a dancing girl. It was beautiful, but deathly. And Gyp, though she was always excited by anything new, alive to all beauty, longed for air and sunlight. It was a relief, close to one of the black-curtained windows, to watch the westering sun shower light on the trees of the Square gardens. She was introduced to a Mr. and Mrs. Gallant, a dark-faced, cynical-looking man with clever, malicious eyes, and a cornucopia of a woman with an avid blue stare. The little dancer had "gone to put on nothing," Rosek informed them.

He took Gyp the round of his treasures, scarabs, Rops drawings, death-masks, Chinese pictures, and queer old flutes, with an air of displaying them for the first time to one who could truly appreciate. Her instinct apprehended the refined viciousness of this place, where nothing, save taste, would be sacred. It was her first glimpse into gilt-edged Bohemia, whence the generosities, *élans*, struggles of Bohemia proper, are excluded as from the spheres where bishops move. But no one could have told that her nerves were crisping as at contact with a corpse. While showing her those alabaster jars, Rosek laid his hand softly on her wrist, and in taking it away, let his fingers, softer than a kitten's paw, ripple over the skin, then put them to his lips. *Technique!* A desperate desire to laugh seized her. And he saw it. He gave her one look, passed his hand over his face, and—behold!—it showed as before, unmortified, unconscious. A deadly little man!

When they returned to the *salon*, as it was called, Miss Daphne Wing, in a black kimono, whence her face and arms emerged more like alabaster than ever, was sitting on a divan beside Fiorsen. She rose at once and came across to Gyp.

"Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen"—why did everything she said begin with "Oh!"— "isn't this room lovely? It's perfect for dancing. I only brought cream, and flame-colour; they go so beautifully with black."

She threw back her kimono for Gyp to inspect her dress—a girdled cream-coloured shift; and her mouth opened, as if for a sugar-plum of praise. She murmured:

"I'm rather afraid of Count Rosek."

"Why?"

"Oh, he's so critical, and smooth, and he comes up so quietly. I do think your husband plays wonderfully. Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen, you are beautiful, aren't you? What would you like me to dance first? A waltz of Chopin's?"

"I love Chopin."

"Then I shall. I shall dance exactly what you like, because I do admire you, and I'm sure you're awfully sweet. Oh, yes; I can see it. And your husband's awfully in love with you. You know, I've been studying five years, and I haven't come out yet. But now Count Rosek's going to back me, I expect it'll be very soon. Will you come to my first night? Mother says I've got to be awfully careful. She only let me come this evening because you were going to be here. Would you like me to begin?"

She slid across to Rosek:

"Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen wants me to begin; a Chopin waltz, please. The one that goes like this."

Gyp sat down beside Fiorsen, and Rosek began playing, his eyes fixed on the girl, and his mouth loosened from compression in a sweetish smile. Miss Daphne Wing was standing with her finger-tips joined at her breast—a statue of ebony and pale wax. She flung away the black kimono and a thrill swept through Gyp. She *could* dance—that common little girl! Every movement of her round, sinuous limbs had the ecstasy of natural genius, controlled by the quivering balance of a fine training. "A dove flying!" Her face had lost its vacancy, or rather its vacancy had become divine, having that look—not lost

but gone before—which dance demands. Tears came up in Gyp's eyes. It was lovely—as when a dove flings itself up in the wind, breasting on with wings bent back, and poised.

When, after the dance, the girl came and sat down beside her, Gyp squeezed her hot little hand, but the caress was for her art, not for this moist little person with the lips avid of sugar-plums.

"Oh, did you like it? I'm so glad. Shall I go and put on my flame-colour, now?"

The moment she was gone, comment broke out. The dark and cynical Gallant thought her dancing like a certain Napierkowska's seen in Moscow, but it had no fire—the touch of passion would have to be supplied. She wanted love! Love! And suddenly Gyp was back in the concert-hall, listening to that other girl singing the song of a broken heart.

"*Thy kiss, dear love—*
Like watercress gathered fresh from cool streams."

Love! in this abode—of faun's heads, deep cushions, silver dancing girls! Love! She had a sudden sense of deep abasement. What was she, herself, but just a feast for a man's senses? Her home, what but a place like this? Daphne Wing was back again. Gyp looked at her husband's face while she was dancing. It——! How was it that she could see that disturbance in him, and not care? If she had really loved him, to see his lips like that would have hurt her, but she might have understood, perhaps, and forgiven. Now she neither quite understood nor quite forgave.

And that night she murmured:

"Would you rather I were that girl—not me?"

"That girl! I could swallow her at a draught. But you, my Gyp—I want to drink for ever!"

Was that true? *If* she had loved him—how good to hear!

V

After this, Gyp was daily more and more in contact with high Bohemia, that curious composite section of society which embraces the neck of music, poetry, and the drama. She felt that she did not belong to it, nor, in truth, did Fiorsen, who was much too genuine a Bohemian, and mocked at the Gallants and even the Roseks of this life, as he mocked at Winton, Aunt Rosamund, and their world. Life with him made Gyp, too, feel less and less a part of that old orthodox, well-bred world which she had known before she married him; but to which she had never felt that she belonged, since she knew the secret of her birth. She was, in truth, much too impressionable and naturally critical to accept the dictates of fact-and-form-governed routine; though, of her own accord, she would never have had initiative enough to step out of its circle. Loosened from those roots, unable to attach herself to this new soil, and not spiritually leagued with her husband, she was more and more lonely. Her only truly happy hours were those spent with Winton or at her piano. She was always wondering at what she had done, longing to find the deep, the sufficient reason for ever having done it. But the more she sought and longed, the deeper grew her bewildered feeling of being in a cage. Of late, too, another and more definite uneasiness had come to her.

She spent much time in her garden, where the blossoms had all dropped, the lilac was over, acacias coming into bloom, and blackbirds silent.

Winton, who, by careful experiment, had found that from half-past three to six there was little chance of stumbling across his son-in-law, came nearly every day for tea and a quiet cigar on the lawn. He was sitting there with Gyp, when Betty brought out a card on which were printed the words "Miss Daphne Wing."

"Bring her out, please, Betty, and some fresh tea, and

plenty of buttered toast; and the chocolates, and any other sweets—Betty darling."

Betty, with the expression which always came over her when called "darling," withdrew across the grass, and Gyp said to her father:

"It's the little dancer I told you of, Dad. Now you'll see something perfect. Only, she'll be dressed. What a pity!"

She was. In warm ivory, shrouded by leaf-green chiffon, with a girdle of tiny artificial leaves, and a head encircled by other green leaves, she was like a nymph peering from a bower. If rather too arresting, it was charming, and no frock could disguise the beauty of her figure. She was evidently nervous.

"Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen, I thought you wouldn't mind my coming. I did so want to see you again. Count Rosek said he thought I might. It's all fixed for my coming-out. Oh, how do you do?" With lips and eyes opening, she sat down in the chair Winton placed for her. Gyp, watching his expression, felt inclined to laugh. Dad and Daphne Wing!

"Have you been dancing at Count Rosek's again lately?"

"Oh, yes, haven't you—didn't you—I—— Oh! yes!"

The thought flashed through Gyp, 'So Gustav's been seeing her, and hasn't told me!' But she said at once:

"Of course; I forgot. When is your 'coming-out'?"

"Next Friday week. At the Octagon. Isn't it splendid? They've given me such a good engagement. I do so want you and Mr. Fiorsen to come, though!"

"Of course we will. My father loves dancing, too; don't you, Dad?"

"When it's good," said Winton urbanely.

"Oh, mine *is* good; isn't it, Mrs. Fiorsen? I mean, I *have* worked—ever since I was thirteen, you know. I simply love it. I think *you* would dance beautifully, Mrs. Fiorsen. You've got such a perfect figure. I simply love to see you walk."

Gyp flushed.

"Do have one of these, Miss Wing—they've got whole raspberries inside."

The little dancer put one in her mouth.

"Oh, but please don't call me Miss Wing! Do call me Daphne. Mr. Fior—everybody does."

Conscious of her father's face, Gyp murmured:

"It's a lovely name. Won't you have another? These are apricot."

"They're perfect. You know, my first dress is to be all orange-blossom; Mr. Fiorsen suggested that. But I expect he told you. Perhaps *you* suggested it really; did you?" Gyp shook her head. "Count Rosek says the world is waiting for me——" She paused with a sugar-plum halfway to her lips, and added: "Do you think it is?"

"I hope so."

"He says I'm something new. It would be nice to think that. He has great taste; so has Mr. Fiorsen, hasn't he?"

Conscious of compression behind the smoke of her father's cigar, Gyp nodded.

The little dancer placed the sweet in her mouth.

"You see, he married you."

Then, conscious of Winton's eyes fixed on her, she became confused, and said:

"Oh, and isn't it lovely here—like the country! I'm afraid I must go; it's my practice time. It's so important for me not to miss any now, isn't it?" She rose, and Winton got up too. Gyp saw her eyes, lighting on his rigid hand, grow rounder; her careful voice floated back:

"Oh, I do hope——" But what, could not be heard.

Gyp sat motionless. Bees were murmurous among her flowers, pigeons among the trees; the sunlight warmed her knees, and her stretched-out feet through the openwork of her stockings. The maid's laughter, the growling of the puppies at play in the kitchen, came drifting down the garden, with the distant cry of a milkman up the road.

All was very peaceful. But in her heart were curious emotions, strange, tangled feelings. This enlightenment regarding the measure of her husband's frankness came on the heels of another revelation. She had said to Winton that she did not want to have a child. In her whose birth had caused her mother's death there was this more or less unconscious aversion. And now she was sure one was coming. She had not reached, knew she could not reach, that spiritual union which might have made the thought of motherhood a joy. She was fairly caught in the web of her foolish and presumptuous mistake! In a few months of marriage she was sure it was a failure, and hopeless for the future! A hard, natural fact is needed to bring to a yearning and bewildered spirit knowledge of the truth. Disillusionment is not welcome, especially when it is disillusionment with self, as well as with another. She had been going to—what?—save Fiorsen from himself! It was laughable. She had only lost herself. Already she felt in prison, and by a child would be all the more bound. To some women the knowledge that a thing must be assuages the nerves. Gyp was the opposite of those. To force her was the way to stir up every contrary emotion.

And so, while the pigeons cooed and the sunlight warmed her feet, she spent the bitterest moments of her life—so far. Pride came to her help. No one must know—certainly not her father, who had warned her so desperately! She had made her bed, and would have to lie on it.

When Winton came back, he said:

"I don't see the fascination, Gyp."

"Don't you think her face really rather perfect?"

"Common."

"Yes; but that drops off when she's dancing."

Winton looked at her from under half-closed eyelids.

"What does Fiorsen think of her?"

"Does he think of her? I don't know."

She could feel the watchful tightening of his face.

"Daphne Wing! By George!"

The words were resentment and distrust incarnate. His daughter in peril from—such as that!

After he was gone Gyp sat on till the sun had gone, and the dew was stealing through her thin frock. To make others happy was the way to be happy—they said. She would try. Betty—so stout, and with that rheumatism in her leg—did she ever think of herself? Of Aunt Rosamund, with her perpetual rescuings of lost dogs, lame horses, and penniless musicians? And Dad, for all his man-of-the-world ways, was he not always doing little things for the men of his old regiment, always thinking of her, too, and what he could do to give her pleasure? To love people, and bring them happiness! Was it possible? People were hard to love, different from birds, beasts and flowers, to love which seemed natural and easy.

She went up and began to dress for dinner. Which of her frocks did he like best? The pale, low-cut amber, or that white, soft one, with the coffee-dipped lace? She decided on the latter. Scrutinising her image in the glass, she shuddered. That would all go; she would become like those women, who made her wonder at their hardihood in showing themselves. Why must one become unsightly in order to bring life into the world? Some women seemed proud to be like that. But she would never dare to show herself in the days coming.

She finished dressing and went downstairs. Fiorsen had not come in. She turned from the window with a sigh of relief, and went into dinner. She ate with the two pups beside her, sent them off, and sat down at her piano. And Betty, who had a weakness for Chopin, sat by the door which partitioned off the back premises, imagining her "pretty" in her white frock, with the candle-flames on each side, and those lovely lilies in the vase close by, smelling beautiful. And one of the maids coming too near, she shooed her away.

It grew late. The maids had gone to bed. Gyp had long stopped playing, and, by the French window, stood gazing out into the dark. How warm it was—warm

enough to draw forth the scent of the jessamine along the garden wall! Not a star. There always seemed so few stars in London. A sound made her swing round. Something tall was over there in the dark room, by the open door. She called out, frightened:

"Is that you, Gustav?"

He spoke some words that she could not understand. Shutting the window quickly, she went toward him. The hall light fell on one side of his face. He was pale; his eyes shone strangely; his sleeve was whitened. He muttered thickly:

"Little ghost!" It was the first time Gyp had ever come to close quarters with drunkenness. How awful if anybody were to see—how awful! She made a rush to get into the hall and lock the door leading to the back regions, but he clutched her shoulder. She stopped dead, fearing to make a noise or pull him over, and his other hand clutched her other shoulder, so that he stood steadying himself by her. She was not shocked. She only felt: 'What am I to do? How to get him upstairs without anyone knowing?' And she looked up into his face—which seemed to her pathetic with its shining eyes and its staring whiteness. She said gently:

"It's all right. Lean on me; we'll go up."

More than disgust, she felt a horrid pity. Putting her arm round his waist, she moved with him towards the stairs. If only no one heard; if only she could get him quietly up! And she murmured:

"Don't talk; lean on me!"

He seemed to make an effort; puffing out his lips with an expression that would have been comic if not so tragic.

Holding him with all her strength, she began to mount. It was easier than she had thought. Across the landing, into the bedroom, and the danger would be over! Done! He was lying across the bed, and the door shut. Then she gave way to a fit of shivering so violent that she could hear her teeth chattering. She caught sight of herself in the big mirror. Her pretty lace was torn; her shoulders red

where his hands had gripped her, holding himself up. She put on a wrapper and went up to him. He was in a sort of stupor, and with difficulty she got him to sit up and lean against the bed-rail, racking her brains for what to give him. Sal volatile! Surely that must be right. When at last he was in bed, she stood looking at him. His eyes were closed; he would not see if she gave way now. But she would not cry. There was nothing to be done but get into bed too. She undressed, and turned out the light. He was in a stertorous sleep. And, staring into the dark, Gyp smiled. She was thinking of all those young wives, in novels, who, blushing, trembling, murmur into the ears of their young husbands that they "have something—something to tell them!"

VI

Looking at Fiorsen, next morning, still sunk in heavy sleep, her first thought was: 'He looks exactly the same.' And, suddenly, it seemed queer to her that she had not been, and still was not, disgusted. It was too deep for disgust, and somehow, too natural. She took this new revelation of his unbridled ways without resentment. Besides, she had long known of this taste of his—one cannot drink brandy and not betray it.

She stole from bed, gathered up his boots and clothes all tumbled on to a chair, and took them forth to the dressing-room. There she held the garments up to the early light and brushed them, then, noiseless, stole back to bed, with needle and thread and her lace. No one must know; not even he must know. For the moment she had forgotten that other thing so terrifically important. It came back to her, very sudden, very sickening. So long as she could keep it secret, no one should know that either—he least of all.

The morning passed as usual; but when she came to the music-room at noon, she found that he had gone out. She was just sitting down to lunch when her maid announced:

"Count Rosek."

Gyp got up, startled.

"Say that Mr. Fiorsen is not in. But—but ask if he will have some lunch, and get a bottle of hock."

In the few seconds before he appeared, she experienced the excitement one has entering a field where a bull is grazing.

Not even his severest critics could accuse Rosek of want of tact. He had hoped to see Gustav, it was charming of her to give him lunch.

He seemed to have renounced his corsets, and some of his offending looks. His face was slightly browned, as if he had been taking his due of air and sun. He talked

without cynical sub-meanings, was appreciative of her "charming house," showed warmth in his sayings about art and music. Gyp had never disliked him less. After lunch, they went across the garden to the music-room, and he sat down at the piano. He had the deep, caressing touch that lies in fingers of steel worked by a real passion for tone. Gyp sat on the divan. She was out of his sight there; and she looked at him, wondering. He was playing Schumann's Child Music. How could one who produced such idyllic sounds have sinister intentions? And presently she said:

"Count Rosek!"

"Madame?"

"Will you tell me why you sent Daphne Wing here yesterday?"

"I?"

"Yes."

He swung round on the music-stool and looked full at her.

"Since you ask me, I thought you should know that Gustav is seeing a good deal of her."

He had given the exact answer she had divined.

"Why should I mind that?"

He got up and said quietly:

"I am glad that you do not."

"Why glad?"

She, too, had risen. Though he was hardly taller than herself, she was conscious of how thick and steely he was beneath his dapper garments, and of a kind of snaky will-power in his face. Her heart beat fast.

He came toward her.

"I am glad you understand that it is over with Gustav —finished——" He stopped, seeing that he had gone wrong, and not knowing quite where. Gyp had simply smiled. A flush coloured his cheeks.

"He is a volcano soon extinguished. You see, I know him. Better you should know him, too."

"Why?"

He said between his teeth:

"That you may not waste your time; there is love waiting for you."

Gyp smiled.

"Was it from love of me that you made him drunk last night?"

"Gyp!" Gyp turned. But he was between her and the door. "You never loved him. That is my excuse. You have given him too much already—more than he is worth. Ah! God! I am tortured by you; I am possessed."

He had gone suddenly quite white, save for his smouldering eyes. She was afraid, and, because she was afraid, she stood her ground. Should she make a dash for the door that opened into the little lane? She could feel that he was trying to break through her defences by sheer intensity of gaze—by a kind of mesmerism, knowing that he had frightened her.

Whether or no he really moved his feet, he seemed coming closer inch by inch. She had a horrible feeling—as if his arms were already round her.

She wrenched her gaze from his, and suddenly his crisp hair caught her eyes. Surely—surely it was curled with tongs! Almost inaudibly, the words escaped her lips: "*Une technique merveilleuse!*" His eyes wavered; his lips fell apart. Gyp walked across the room and put her hand on the bell. She had lost all fear. And without a word, he turned, and went out into the garden. She watched him cross the lawn. She had beaten him by the one thing not even violent passions can withstand—ridicule. Was it possible that she had really been frightened, nearly failing in that encounter, nearly dominated by that man—in her own house, with her own maids down there at hand?

In the garden was the first real warmth of summer. Mid-June of a fine year—the air drowsy with hum and scent.

And, sitting in the shade, while the puppies rolled and

snapped, Gyp searched her little world for sense of safety; as if all round her were a hot, heavy fog in which things lurked, and she held them away only by pride and the will not to cry out that she was struggling and afraid.

Fiorsen, leaving his house that morning, had walked till he saw a taxi-cab. Leaning back therein, with hat thrown off, he caused himself to be driven rapidly, at random. This was one of his habits when his mind was not at ease. The motion was sedative. And he needed sedatives this morning. To wake in his own bed without remembering how he had got there, was no more new to him than to many another man of twenty-eight, but it was new since his marriage. If he had remembered even less, he would have been more at ease. But he could just recollect standing in the dark drawing-room, seeing a ghostly Gyp quite close to him. Somehow, he was afraid; and, when afraid —like most people—was at his worst.

If she had resembled other women in whose company he had eaten passion-fruit, he would not have felt this carking humiliation. If she had been like them, he would already have "finished," as Rosek had said. But he knew well enough that he had not "finished." He might get drunk, might be loose in every way, but Gyp was hooked into his senses. Her passivity was her strength, the secret of her magnetism. In her, he felt that mysterious sentiency of nature, which, even in yielding to man's fevers, lies apart with a faint smile—the uncapturable smile of the woods and fields by day or night, the unfathomable, soft, vibrating indifference of the flowers and trees and streams, of the rocks, of bird-songs, and the eternal hum, under sunshine or starshine. Her dark, half-smiling eyes enticed him, inspired an unquenchable thirst. And his was one of those natures which, encountering spiritual difficulty, at once jib off, seek anodynes, try to bandage wounded egoism with excess—a spoiled child, with the desperations and the inherent pathos, the something repulsive and the something lovable which belong to all such. Having

wished for this moon, and got her, he now did not know what to do with her, kept grasping at her, with a feeling all the time of getting further and further away. His failure to get near her spiritually drove him toward folly. Only work kept him in control at all. For he did work hard; though, even there, something was lacking. He had all the qualities of making good, except the moral backbone, which alone could give him his rightful—as he thought—pre-eminence. It often surprised and vexed him to find that some contemporary held higher rank than himself.

In his cab, he mused:

'Did I do anything that really shocked her last night? Why didn't I wait for her this morning and find out the worst?' And he smiled wryly—to find out the worst was not his forte. Meditation, seeking as usual a scapegoat, lighted on Rosek. Like most egoists addicted to women, he had not many friends. Rosek was the most constant. But even for him, Fiorsen had at once the contempt and fear that a man naturally uncontrolled and yet of greater scope has for one of less talent but stronger will-power. He treated him as a wayward child treats its nurse; and needed him as a patron with well-lined pockets.

'Curse Paul!' he thought. 'He must know—he does know—that brandy of his goes down like water. He saw I was getting silly! He had some game on. Where did I go after? How did I get home? Did I hurt Gyp?' If the servants had seen—it would upset her fearfully! He had a fresh access of fear. He didn't know her, never knew what she was thinking or feeling, never knew anything about her. It was not fair! He didn't hide himself from her. He was as free as nature; he let her see everything. What had he done? The maid had looked very queerly at him that morning! And suddenly he said to the driver: "Bury Street, St. James's." He could find out, at all events, whether Gyp had been to her father's. He changed his mind several times before

the cab reached that little street; and a light sweat broke out on his forehead while he was waiting for the door to be opened.

"Mrs. Fiorsen here?"

"No, sir."

"Not been this morning?"

"No, sir."

He shrugged away the thought that he ought to give some explanation of his question, and got into the cab again, telling the man to drive to Curzon Street. If she had not been to "that Aunt Rosamund" either, it would be all right—there was no one else she would go to. She had not. And, with a sigh of relief, he began to want breakfast. He would go to Rosek's, borrow the money to pay his cab, and lunch there. Rosek was not in. He would have to go home to get the cab paid. The driver seemed to eye him queerly now, as though conceiving doubts about the fare.

Under the trellis, Fiorsen passed a man with a long envelope in his hand.

Gyp was sitting at her bureau adding up the counterfoils in her cheque-book. She did not turn round.

"Is there any lunch?" he said.

She reached out and rang the bell. He felt sorry for himself. He had been quite ready to take her in his arms and say: "Forgive me, little Gyp; I'm sorry!"

Betty answered the bell.

"Please bring up some lunch for Mr. Fiorsen."

He heard the stout woman sniff as she went out. She was a part of his ostracism. And he said irritably:

"Do you want a husband who would die if he missed the luncheon hour?"

Gyp held out her cheque-book. He read on the counterfoil:

"Messrs. Travers & Sanborn, Tailors, Account rendered: £54 3s. 7d."

Fiorsen turned the peculiar colour which denoted injury to his self-esteem.

"Did you pay it? You have no business to pay my bills."

"The man said if it wasn't paid this time, he'd sue you. I think owing money is undignified. Are there many others?"

"I shall not tell you."

"I have to keep this house and pay the maids, and I want to know how I stand. I am not going to make debts."

Her face had a hardness that he did not know. She was different from the Gyp of this hour yesterday—when, last in possession of his faculties, he had seen or spoken to her. This novel revolt stirred him in strange ways, wounded his self-conceit, inspired a curious fear, yet excited his senses. He said softly:

"Money! Curse money! Kiss me!"

"It's childish to curse money. I will spend all the income I have; but not more, and I will not ask Dad."

He flung himself down in a chair.

"Ho! Ho! Virtue!"

"No—pride."

He said gloomily:

"So you don't believe in me. You don't believe I can earn as much as I want—more than you have—any time? You never have believed in me."

"I think you earn now as much as you are ever likely to earn."

"Oh! you think that! Well! I don't want your money!"

"Hssh!"

He looked round. The maid stood in the doorway.

"Please, sir, the driver says can he have his fare, or do you want him again? Twelve shillings."

Fiorsen stared at her in the way that—as the maid often said—made you 'feel a silly.'

"No. Pay him."

The girl glanced at Gyp, answered: "Yes, sir," and went out.

Fiorsen laughed. It was droll coming on the top of his assertion.

"That was good, wasn't it, Gyp?"

But her face was unmoved; and, knowing that she was even more easily tickled by the incongruous than himself, he felt again that catch of fear. Something was different. Yes; something was really different.

"Did I hurt you last night?"

She shrugged her shoulders and went to the window. He looked at her darkly, and swung out past her into the garden. And, almost at once, the sound of his violin, furiously played in the music-room, came across the lawn.

Gyp listened with a bitter smile. Money, too! But what did it matter? She could not get out of what she had done. She could never get out. To-night he would kiss her; and she would pretend it was all right. And so it would go on and on! Well, it was her own fault. Taking twelve shillings from her purse, she put them aside on the bureau to give the maid. And suddenly she thought: 'Perhaps he'll get tired of me. If only he would get tired!' It was a long way the furthest she had yet gone.

VII

Those who know how, in the doldrums, the sails of the listless ship droop, and the hope of escape dies day by day, may understand something of the life she began living now. Even the doldrums come to an end. But a young woman of twenty-three, who, having made a mistake in her marriage, has only herself to blame, looks forward to no end, unless she be the new woman, which Gyp was not. Having settled that she would not admit failure, and clenched her teeth on the knowledge that she was going to have a child, she went on keeping things sealed up even from Winton. To Fiorsen, she managed to behave as usual, making material life easy and pleasant—playing for him, feeding him well, indulging his amorousness. To count herself a martyr would be silly! Her *malaise*, successfully concealed, was deeper—of the spirit; the subtle discouragement of one who has clipped her own wings.

As for Rosek, she treated him as if that little scene had never taken place. The idea of appealing to her husband in a difficulty was gone for ever since the night he came home drunk. And she did not dare to tell her father. But she was always on her guard, knowing that Rosek would not forgive her for that dart of ridicule. His insinuations about Daphne Wing she put out of mind, as she never could have if she had loved Fiorsen. She set up for herself the idol of pride, and became its faithful worshipper. Only Winton, and perhaps Betty, could tell she was not happy. Fiorsen's irresponsibility about money did not worry her overmuch, for she paid everything in the house—rent, wages, food, and her own dress—and had so far made ends meet; what he did outside the house she could not help.

The summer wore on till concerts were over, and it was supposed to be impossible to stay in London. But she dreaded going away. She wanted to stay on quietly in her little house. It was this which made her tell Fiorsen her

secret one night. His cheeks, white and hollow from too much London, went a curious dull red; he got up and stared at her. Gyp made an involuntary movement.

"You needn't look at me. It's true."

He clasped his forehead and broke out:

"But I don't want it; I won't have it—spoiling my Gyp." Then quickly going up to her with a scared face: "I don't want it; I'm afraid of it. Don't have it."

In Gyp's heart came the same feeling as when he had stood there drunk, against the wall—compassion, rather than contempt of his childishness. And taking his hand, she said:

"All right, Gustav. It shan't bother you. When I begin to get ugly, I'll go away with Betty till it's over."

He went down on his knees.

"Oh, no! Oh, no! Oh, no! My beautiful Gyp!"

And Gyp sat like a sphinx, for fear that she too might let slip those words: "Oh, no!"

The windows were open, and moths had come in. One had settled on the hydrangea plant that filled the hearth. Gyp looked at the soft, white, downy thing, whose head was like a tiny owl's against the bluish petals; looked at the purple-grey tiles down there, and the stuff of her own frock, in the shaded gleam of the lamps. And all her love of beauty rebelled, called up by his: "Oh, no!" She would be unsightly soon, and suffer pain, and perhaps die of it, as her own mother had died.

It interested her this night and the next day to watch his treatment of the disconcerting piece of knowledge. For when at last he realised that he had to acquiesce in nature, he began to jib away from all reminder of it. She was careful not to suggest that he should go for a holiday without her. But when he was gone—to Ostend with Rosek—peace fell on Gyp. To be without that strange, disorderly presence in the house! And awakening in the sultry silence of the next morning, she utterly failed to persuade herself that she was missing him. Her heart was

devoid of any emptiness or ache; she only felt how pleasant and cool and tranquil it was to lie there alone. She stayed quite late in bed. It was delicious, with window and door wide open and the puppies running in and out, to lie and doze off, or listen to the pigeon's cooing, and the distant sounds of traffic, and feel in command of herself once more, body and soul. Now that she had told Fiorsen, she had no longer any desire to keep her condition secret. She telephoned to her father that she was alone.

Winton had not gone away. Between Goodwood and Doncaster there was no racing he cared for; one could not ride at this time of year, so might just as well be in London. August was to him the pleasantest of all months in Town; the club was empty, and he could sit there without some old bore buttonholing him. Little Boncarte, the fencing-master, was always free for a bout—Winton had long learned to make his left hand what his right hand used to be; the Turkish baths in Jermyn Street were nearly void of their fat clients; he could saunter over to Covent Garden, buy a melon, and carry it home without meeting any but the most inferior duchesses in Piccadilly; on warm nights he could stroll the streets or the parks, smoking his cigar, thinking vague thoughts, recalling vague memories. The news that his daughter was alone and free from that fellow was delightful. Where should he dine her? Mrs. Markey was on her holiday. Why not Blafard's? Quiet—small rooms—not too respectable—quite fairly cool. Blafard's!

When she drove up to Bury Street he was ready, feeling like a schoolboy off for an exeat. How pretty she was looking—though pale—her dark eyes, her smile! And stepping quickly to the cab, he said:

"No; I'm getting in—dining at Blafard's, Gyp—a night out!"

To walk into that little restaurant behind her; and passing through its low red rooms to mark the diners turn and stare with envy, was so pleasant. He settled her into a far corner by a window, where she could see and be seen. He

wanted her to be seen; while he himself turned to the world the back wings of his greyish hair. He had no notion of being disturbed by the sight of Hivites and Amorites, lapping champagne and shining in the heat. For, secretly, he was living not only in this evening, but in an evening of the past, when, in this very corner, he had dined with her mother. *His* face then had borne the brunt; hers had been turned away from inquisition. But of this he did not speak to Gyp.

He took her news with the expression she knew so well —tightening his lips and staring a little upward.

"When?" he said.

"November."

The very month! Stretching his hand across the table, he took hers and pressed it tightly.

"It'll be all right, child; I'm glad."

Clinging to his hand, Gyp murmured:

"I'm not; but I won't be frightened—I promise."

Neither was deceived. But both were good at putting a calm face on things. Besides, this was "a night out"—the first since her marriage of freedom. After his: "So he's gone to Ostend?" and his thought: 'He would!' they never alluded to Fiorsen, but talked of horses, of Mildenham—it seemed to Gyp years since she had been there—of her childish escapades. And, looking at him quizzically, she asked:

"What were you like as a boy, Dad? Aunt Rosamund says that you used to get into white rages, when nobody could go near you. She says you were always climbing trees, or shooting with a catapult, or stalking things, and that you never told anybody what you didn't want to tell them. And weren't you desperately in love with your nursery-governess?"

Winton smiled. Miss Huntley! with crinkly brown hair, and blue eyes, and fascinating frocks!

"Yes, yes. By Jove, what a time ago! And my father's going off to India. He never came back; killed in that first Afghan business. When I was fond, I *was*

fond. But I didn't feel things like you—not half so sensitive; not a bit like you, Gyp."

And watching her unconscious eyes following the movements of the waiters, never staring, but taking in all that was going on, he thought: 'Prettiest creature in the world!'

"Well," he said, "what would you like to do now—drop into a theatre or music-hall?"

Gyp shook her head. It was too hot. Could they just drive, and then perhaps sit in the park? It had gone dark, and the air was not quite so exhausted—a little freshness of scent from the trees in the squares and parks mingled with the fumes of dung and petrol. Winton gave the same order he had given that long past evening: "Knightsbridge Gate." It had been a hansom then, and the night air had blown in their faces, instead of, as now in these taxis, down the back of one's neck. They left the cab and crossed the Row; passed the end of the Long Water, up among the trees. There, on two chairs covered by Winton's coat, they sat side by side. No dew was falling yet; the leaves hung unstirring in the warm, sweet-smelling air. Blotted against trees or on the grass were other couples darker than the darkness, very silent. From Winton's lips cigar smoke wreathed and curled. He was dreaming. A long ash fell. He raised his hand to brush it off. Her voice said softly in his ear:

"Isn't it delicious, and warm, and bloomy dark?"

Winton shivered.

"Very jolly! But my cigar's out, and I haven't a match."

Gyp's hand slipped through his arm.

"All these people in love, and so dark and whispery—it makes a sort of strangeness in the air. Don't you feel it?"

A puff of wind ruffled the leaves; the night, for a moment, seemed full of whispering; then the sound of a giggle jarred out.

Gyp rose.

"I feel the dew now, Dad. Can we walk on?"

The spell was over; the night again only a common London night; the park a space of parching grass and gravel; the people just clerks and shop-girls walking out.

VIII

Fiorsen's letters were documents. He missed her horribly; but he seemed to be enjoying himself uncommonly. He wanted money, but failed to tell her how he spent it. Out of a balance running low, she sent him remittances; this was her holiday, too, and she could afford to pay for it. She sought out a shop where she could sell jewellery, and forwarded him the proceeds. It would give her another week.

One night she went with Winton to the Octagon, where Daphne Wing was still performing. Remembering the girl's rapture in her garden, she wrote next day, asking her to lunch and spend a lazy afternoon.

Miss Daphne came with avidity; pale, and droopy from the heat, in Liberty silk, with a plain turned down straw hat. After lunch they settled in the deepest shade of the garden, Gyp in a wicker chair, Daphne Wing on cushions and the grass. Once past the exclamatory stage, she laid bare her little soul with liberality. And Gyp—excellent listener—enjoyed the revelation of an existence so different from her own.

"Of course I don't mean to stay at home any longer than I can help; only it's no good going out into life"—this phrase she often used—"till you know where you are. In my profession one has to be so careful. Of course, people think it's worse than it is; Father gets fits sometimes. But you know, Mrs. Fiorsen, home's awful. We have mutton—you know what mutton is—it's really awful in your bedroom in hot weather. And there's nowhere to practise. What I should like would be a studio. It would be lovely, somewhere down by the river, or up here near you. That *would* be lovely. You know, I'm putting by. As soon as ever I have two hundred pounds, I shall skip. What I think would be perfectly lovely would be to inspire painters and musicians. I don't want to be just a common 'turn'—ballet business year after year, and that; I want to be something rather special. But Mother's

so silly about me; she thinks I oughtn't to take any risks at all. I shall never get on that way. It *is* so nice to talk to you, Mrs. Fiorsen, because you're young enough to know what I feel; and I'm sure you'd never be shocked at anything. You see, about men: Ought one to marry, or ought one to take a lover? They say you can't be a perfect artist till you've felt passion. But, then, if you marry, that means mutton over again, and perhaps babies, and perhaps the wrong man after all. Ugh! But then, on the other hand, I don't want to be raffish. I hate raffish people—I simply hate them. What do you think? It's awfully difficult, isn't it?"

Gyp, perfectly grave, answered:

"That sort of thing settles itself. I shouldn't bother beforehand."

Daphne Wing buried her chin deeper in her hands.

"Yes; I rather thought that, too; of course I could do either now. But, you see, I really don't care for men who are not distinguished. I'm sure I shall only fall in love with a really distinguished man. That's what you did—isn't it?—so you *must* understand. I think Mr. Fiorsen is wonderfully distinguished."

Sunlight, piercing the shade, suddenly fell warm on Gyp's neck where her blouse ceased. She continued to look gravely at Daphne Wing.

"Of course, Mother would have fits if I asked her such a question, and I don't know what Father would do. Only it is important, isn't it? One may go all wrong from the start; and I do really want to get on. I simply adore my work. I don't mean to let love stand in its way; I want to make it help, you know. Count Rosek says my dancing lacks passion. I wish you'd tell me if you think it does. I should believe *you*."

Gyp shook her head.

"I'm not a judge."

Daphne Wing looked up reproachfully.

"Oh, I'm sure you are! If I were a man, I should be passionately in love with you. I've got a new dance

where I'm supposed to be a nymph pursued by a faun; it's so difficult to feel like a nymph when you know it's only the ballet-master. Do you think I ought to put passion into that? You see, I'm supposed to be flying all the time; but it would be much more subtle, wouldn't it, if I could give the impression that I wanted to be caught? Don't you think so?"

Gyp said suddenly:

"Yes, I think it *would* do you good to be in love."

Miss Daphne's mouth fell a little open; her eyes grew round. She said:

"You frightened me when you said that. You looked so—so—intense."

A flame, indeed, had leaped up in Gyp. This fluffy, flabby talk of love set her instincts in revolt. She did not want to love; she had failed to fall in love. But, whatever love was like, it did not bear talking about. How was it that this suburban miss, when she once got on her toes, could twirl one's emotions as she did?

"D'you know what I should simply revel in?" Daphne Wing went on: "To dance to you here in the garden some night. It must be wonderful to dance out of doors; and the grass is nice and hard now. Only, I suppose it would shock the servants. Do they look out this way?" Gyp shook her head. "I could dance over there in front of the drawing-room window. Only it would have to be moonlight. I could come any Sunday. I've got a dance where I'm supposed to be a lotus flower—that would do splendidly. And there's my real moonlight dance that goes to Chopin. I could bring my dresses, and change in the music-room, couldn't I?" She sat up cross-legged, gazing at Gyp, and clasping her hands. "Oh, may I?"

A desire to give pleasure, the queerness of the notion, and her real love of seeing this girl dance, made Gyp say:

"All right; next Sunday."

Daphne Wing got up, made a rush, and kissed her.

Her mouth was soft, and she smelled of orange blossom; but Gyp recoiled a little—she hated promiscuous kisses. Abashed, Miss Daphne hung her head, and said:

"You looked so lovely; I couldn't help it, really."

Gyp gave her hand a compunctious squeeze.

They went indoors, to try over the music for the two dances; and soon after Daphne Wing departed, full of sugar-plums and hope.

She arrived punctually at eight o'clock next Sunday, carrying a small green linen bag which contained her dresses. She was evidently a little scared. Lobster salad, hock, and peaches restored her courage. She ate heartily. It did not apparently matter to her whether she danced full or empty; but she would not smoke.

"It's bad for the—don't you know," she said.

After supper, Gyp shut the dogs into the back premises; having visions of their rending Miss Wing's draperies, or calves. Then they went into the drawing-room, not lighting up, so as to tell when the moonlight was strong enough outside. This last night of August the heat was as great as ever—a deep, unstirring warmth; the climbing moon shot as yet but a thin shaft here and there through the heavy leafage. They talked in low voices, unconsciously playing up to the nature of the escapade. When the moon was high enough they stole out across the garden to the music-room. Gyp lighted the candles.

"Can you manage?"

Miss Daphne had already shed half her garments.

"Oh, I'm so excited, Mrs. Fiorsen! I do hope I shall dance well."

Gyp went back to the house and sat down at the piano, turning her eyes towards the garden. A blurred white shape flitted suddenly across the darkness at the far end and became motionless—like a white-flowering bush under the trees—waiting for the moon. Gyp began to play. She played a little Sicilian pastorale that the herdsmen play on their pipes coming down from the hills, from very far, rising, swelling to full cadence, and falling away again to nothing.

The moon rose over the trees; its light flooded the face of the house, down on to the grass, and spread slowly, till it caught the border of sunflowers along the garden wall with a stroke of magical, unearthly colour—gold that was not gold.

Gyp began to play the dance. The pale blur in the darkness stirred. The moonlight fell on the girl now, standing with arms spread, holding out her drapery—a white, winged statue. Then, like a gigantic moth she fluttered forth, blanched and noiseless, flew over the grass, spun and hovered. The moonlight etched out the shape of her head, painted her hair a pallid gold. In the silence, with that unearthly gleam of colour along the sunflowers and on the girl's head, it was as if a spirit had dropped into the garden and was fluttering to and fro, unable to get out.

A voice behind Gyp said: "My God! What's this? An angel?"

Fiorsen was standing halfway in the darkened room, staring out into the garden. The girl stopped, her eyes round as saucers, her mouth open, her limbs rigid with interest and affright. Suddenly she turned, and, gathering her garment, fled, her limbs gleaming in the moonlight.

Gyp sat looking up at the apparition of her husband. She could just see his eyes straining after that flying nymph. Miss Daphne's faun! Why, even his ears were pointed! Had she never noticed before how like a faun he was? Yes—on her wedding night! And she said quietly:

"Daphne Wing was rehearsing her new dance. So you're back! Why didn't you let me know? Are you all right—you look splendid!"

Fiorsen bent and kissed her.

But even while his lips were pressed on hers, she felt rather than saw his eyes straying to the garden, and thought, 'He would like to be kissing that girl!'

While he went to get his things from the cab, she slipped out to the music-room.

Miss Daphne, fully dressed, was stuffing her garments into the green linen bag. She looked up.

"Oh! Does he mind? It's awful, isn't it?"

Gyp strangled her desire to laugh.

"It's for you to mind."

"Oh, *I* don't, if you don't! How did you like the dance?"

"Lovely! When you're ready—come along!"

"Oh, I think I'd rather go home, please! It must seem so funny!"

"Would you like to go by this back way into the lane? You turn to the right, into the road."

"Oh, yes; please. It would have been better if he could have seen the dance properly, wouldn't it? What will he think?"

Gyp smiled, and opened the door into the lane.

When she returned, Fiorsen was at the window, gazing out. Was it for her or for the flying nymph?

IX

September and October passed. There were more concerts, not very well attended. Fiorsen's novelty had worn off, nor had his playing enough sweetness and sentiment for the big Public. A financial crisis had developed, but it seemed remote and unreal in the shadow of her coming time. She made no garments, no preparations of any kind. Why make what might never be needed? She played for Fiorsen a great deal, for herself not at all, read many books—poetry, novels, biographies—taking them in at the moment and forgetting them at once. Winton and Aunt Rosamund, by tacit agreement, came on alternate afternoons. And Winton would take the evening train after leaving her, to go racing or cub-hunting, returning the morning of the day after to pay his next visit. He had no dread just then like that of an unoccupied day face to face with anxiety.

Betty, who had been present at Gyp's birth, was in a queer state. The obvious desirability of such events to one of a motherly type, defrauded by fate of children, was terribly impinged on by that old memory, and a solicitude for her "pretty" far exceeding what she would have had for a daughter of her own. What a peony regards as a natural happening to a peony, she watches with awe when it happens to the lily. That other single lady of a certain age, Aunt Rosamund, the very antithesis to Betty—a long, thin nose and a mere button, a sense of divine rights and no sense of rights at all, a drawl and a comforting wheeze, length and circumference, decision and the curtsey to providence, humour and none, dyspepsia, and the digestion of an ostrich, with other appositions—Aunt Rosamund was also uneasy, as only one could be who disapproved of uneasiness, and habitually joked it into retirement.

But of all those around Gyp, Fiorsen gave the most interesting display. He had not even an elementary notion of disguising his state of mind. And his state of

mind was primitive. He wanted Gyp as she had been. The thought that she might never become herself again forced him to drink brandy, and come home only a little less far gone than that first time. Gyp had often to help him go to bed. On two or three occasions, he suffered so that he was out all night. To account for this, she devised the formula of a room at Count Rosek's, where he slept when music kept him late, so as not to disturb her. Whether the servants believed her or not, she never knew. Nor did she ever ask him where he went—too proud, and not feeling that she had the right.

Conscious of the unæsthetic nature of her condition, she felt she could no longer be attractive to one so easily upset in his nerves, so intolerant of ugliness. As to deeper feelings about her—had he any? He certainly never gave anything up, or sacrificed himself in any way. If she had loved, she herself would want to give up everything to the loved one; but then—she would never love! And yet he seemed frightened about her. It was puzzling! But perhaps she would not be puzzled much longer about that or anything; for she often had the feeling that she would die; and, at times, felt that she would be glad to die. Life had defrauded her, or, rather, she had defrauded herself of life. Was it really only a year since that glorious day's hunting when Dad and she, and the young man with the irrepressible smile, had slipped away ahead of all the field —the fatal day Fiorsen descended from the clouds and asked for her? A longing for Mildenham came on her, to get away there with her father and Betty.

She went at the beginning of November.

Over her departure Fiorsen behaved like a tired child that will not go to bed. He could not bear to be away from her; but when she had gone, he spent a furious Bohemian evening. At about five, he woke with "an awful cold feeling in my heart," as he wrote to Gyp next day—"an awful feeling, my Gyp; I walked up and down for hours" (in reality, half an hour at most). "How shall I bear to be away from you at this time? I feel

lost." Next day he found himself in Paris with Rosek. "I could not stand," he wrote, "the sight of the streets, of the garden, of our room. When I come back I shall stay with Rosek. Nearer to the day I will come; I must come to see you." But Gyp, when she read the letter, said to Winton: "Dad, when it comes, don't send for him. I don't want him here."

Those letters of his destroyed the last remnant of her feeling that somewhere in him must be something fine and beautiful like the sounds he made with his violin. And yet she felt those letters genuine in a way, pathetic, and with real feeling of a sort.

At Mildenham she began to lose hopelessness about herself; had the sensation of wanting to live in the new life within her. She first felt it going into her old nursery, where everything was as it had been when she was a child of eight; her old red doll's house, the side of which opened to display the various floors; the worn Venetian blinds, the rattle of whose fall had sounded in her ears so many hundred times; the high fender, near which she had lain so often on the floor, chin on hands, reading Grimm, or "Alice in Wonderland," or histories of England. Here, too, this new child would live among the old familiars. And the whim seized her to face her hour in the old nursery, not the room where she had slept as a girl. In the nursery—there was safety, comfort! And when she had been at Mildenham a week, she made Betty change her over.

No one in that house was half so calm as Gyp. Betty was not guiltless of crying at odd moments. Mrs. Markey had never made such bad soups. Markey forgot himself in talk. Winton was like an unquiet spirit. His voice, so measured and dry, too plainly disclosed the anxiety in his heart. Gyp felt it wonderful that they should all care so much! She would sit staring into the fire with her wide, dark eyes, unblinking as an owl's at night—wondering how she could make up to her father, whom already she had nearly killed by coming into life at all.

X

From the day of the nurse's arrival, Winton gave up hunting. He was never away from the house for more than half an hour at a time. Distrust of doctors did not prevent him having ten minutes every morning with the old practitioner who had treated Gyp for mumps, measles, and the other ills of childhood. Old Rivershaw was a peculiar survival. He smelled of mackintosh, had purplish cheeks, a rim of dyed hair, and bulging grey bloodshot eyes. He was short in body and wind, drank port wine, took snuff, read *The Times*, spoke in a husky voice, and used a very small brougham with a very old black horse. But he had a certain low cunning, which had defeated many ailments, and his reputation for assisting people into the world stood high. Every morning punctually at twelve, the crunch of his brougham's wheels would be heard. Winton would get up, and take out a decanter of port, a biscuit canister, and a glass. When the doctor appeared, he would say:

"Well, doctor? How is she?"

"Nicely; quite nicely."

"Nothing to make one anxious?"

With eyes straying to the decanter, the doctor would murmur:

"Cardiac condition, capital—a little—um—not to matter. Taking its course. These things!"

"Glass of port, doctor?"

An expression of surprise would pass over the doctor's face.

"Cold day—ah, perhaps——" And he would blow his nose on his purple-and-red bandanna.

Watching him drink his port, Winton would remark:

"We can get you at any time, can't we?"

"Never fear, my dear sir! Little Miss Gyp—old friend of mine. At her service day and night. Never fear!"

A sensation of comfort would pass through Winton,

which would last quite twenty minutes after the crunching of the wheels and the mingled perfumes had died away.

By Gyp's request, they kept from him knowledge of when her pains began. After the first bout, when she was lying half-asleep in the old nursery, he happened to go up. The nurse—a bonny creature—met him in the sitting-room. Accustomed to the "fuss and botheration of men" at such times, she was prepared to deliver a lecture. But affected by the look on his face, she simply whispered:

"It's beginning; don't be anxious—she's not suffering just now. We shall send for the doctor soon. She's very plucky;" and with an unaccustomed sensation of respect and pity, she repeated: "Don't be anxious, sir."

"If she wants to see me at any time, I shall be in my study. Save her all you can, nurse."

The nurse returned pensive to Gyp, who said:

"Was that my father? I didn't want him to know."

"That's all right, my dear."

"How long do you think before it'll begin again, nurse? I'd like to see him."

The nurse stroked her hair.

"Soon enough when it's all over and comfy. Men are always fidgety."

Gyp looked at her, and said quietly:

"You see, my mother died when I was born."

The nurse smoothed the bed-clothes.

"That's nothing—that is, I mean—it has no connection whatever."

And seeing Gyp smile, she thought: 'Well, I am a fool.'

"If by any chance I don't get through, I want to be cremated. Will you remember, nurse? I can't tell my father that just now; it might upset him."

And the nurse thought: 'That can't be done without a will or something, but I'd better promise. It's a morbid fancy, and yet she's not a morbid subject, either.' And she said:

"Very well, my dear; only, you're not going to do anything of the sort."

"I'm awfully ashamed, wanting all this attention, and making people miserable."

The nurse, still busy with the bed-clothes, murmured: "Don't you fancy you're half the trouble most of them are. You're going to get on splendidly." And she thought: 'Odd! She's never once spoken of her husband. I don't like it for this sort—too sensitive; her face touches you.'

Gyp murmured:

"I'd like to see my father, please; and rather quick."

The nurse, after a swift look, went out.

Gyp had clenched her hands under the bed-clothes. November! Acorns and the leaves—a nice, damp, earthy smell! Acorns all over the grass. She used to drive the old retriever in harness on the lawn covered with acorns and the dead leaves, and the wind still blowing them off the trees—in her brown velvet dress! Who was it had called her once "a wise little owl," in that dress? And her heart sank—the pain was coming again. Winton's voice from the door said:

"Well, my pet?"

"It was only to see how you are. I'm all right."

Her forehead was wet to his lips.

Outside, in the passage, her smile, like something actual on the air, preceded him—the smile that had just lasted out. But when he was back in the study, he suffered. Why could he not have that pain to bear instead?

The crunch of the brougham brought his march over the carpet to an end. He went out into the hall and looked into the doctor's face—he had forgotten that this old fellow knew nothing of his special reason for deadly fear. Then he turned back into his study. A wild south-west wind was whirling wet drift-leaves against the panes. It was here that he had stood looking out into the dark, when Fiorsen came down to ask for Gyp a year ago. Why had he not bundled the fellow out neck and crop, and taken

her away?—India, Japan—anywhere! She had not loved that fiddler, never really loved him. Monstrous! Full bitterness swept over Winton, and he groaned aloud. He went over to the bookcase; there were the few books he ever read, and he took one out. "Life of General Lee." He put it back and took another, a novel of Whyte-Melville's: "Good for Nothing." Sad book—sad ending! It dropped from his hand with a flump on to the floor. In icy discovery, he had seen his life as it would be if for a second time he had to bear such loss. She must not die! If she did—then, for him——! In old times they buried a man with his horse and his dog, as if at the end of a good run. There was always that! The extremity of this thought brought relief. He sat down, and, for a long time, stayed staring into the fire in a sort of coma. Then his feverish fears began again. Why the devil didn't they come and tell him something, anything—rather than this silence, this deadly waiting? The front door shutting? Wheels? At the door stood Markey, holding in his hand some cards.

"Lady Summerhay; Mr. Bryan Summerhay. I said 'Not at home,' sir."

Winton nodded.

"You have had no lunch, sir."

"What time is it?"

"Four o'clock."

"Bring in my fur coat and the port, and make the fire up. I want any news there is."

Markey nodded.

Odd to sit in a fur coat before a fire, and the day not cold! They said you lived on after death. He had never been able to feel that *she* was living on. *She* lived in Gyp. And now if Gyp——! He got up and drew the curtains.

It was seven o'clock when the doctor came down. Winton was still sitting before the fire, motionless, shrunk into his fur coat. He raised himself a little and looked round.

The doctor puckered his face, drooping his eyelids half-

way across his bulging eyes; it was his way of smiling. "Nicely," he said; "nicely—a girl. No complications."

Winton's lips opened, he raised his hand. Then, the habit of a lifetime inhibiting, he stayed motionless.

"Glass of port, doctor?"

Above the glass the doctor seemed to muse: 'H'm! "the fifty-two." Give me "the sixty-eight"—more body.'

After a time, Winton went up. In the outer room he had a return of his cold dread. "Perfectly successful—the patient died from exhaustion!" A tiny squawking noise failed to reassure him. He cared nothing for that new being. Suddenly he found Betty just behind him.

"What is it, woman? Don't!"

She was sobbing, and gurgling:

"She looks so lovely—oh dear, she looks so lovely!"

Pushing her abruptly aside, Winton peered in through the just-opened door. Gyp was lying still and white; her eyes, very dark, were fastened on her baby. Her face wore a kind of wonder. She did not see Winton, who stood stone-quiet, watching, while the nurse moved about her business behind a screen. This was the first time in his life that he had seen a mother with her just-born baby. The look on her face—gone right away—amazed him. She had never seemed to like children, had said she did not want a child. He went in. She made a faint motion toward the baby, and her eyes smiled. Winton looked at that swaddled speckled mite; then, bending down, kissed her hand and tiptoed away.

At dinner he drank champagne, benevolent towards all the world. Watching the smoke of his cigar, he thought: 'Must send that chap a wire.' After all, he was a fellow-being—might be suffering, as he himself had suffered only two hours ago. To keep him in ignorance——! And, writing:

"All well, a daughter.—WINTON,"

sent it out with the order that a groom should take it in that night.

Gyp was sleeping when he stole up at ten o'clock.

XI

Returning the next afternoon from the first ride for several days, Winton passed the station fly rolling away from the drive-gate with the light-hearted disillusionment of a quite empty vehicle.

The sight of a fur coat and broad-brimmed hat in the hall warned him of what had happened.

"Mr. Fiorsen, sir; gone up to Mrs. Fiorsen."

"Did he bring things?"

"A bag, sir."

"Get a room ready, then."

To dine *tête-à-tête* with that fellow!

Gyp had passed the strangest morning in her life, so far. The tug of her baby's lips gave her the queerest sensation; a sort of meltedness, an infinite warmth, a desire to grip the little creature right into her. Yet, neither her sense of humour nor her sense of beauty were deceived. It was a queer little creature, with a tuft of black hair, and in grace greatly inferior to a kitten. Its tiny, pink, crisped fingers with infinitesimal nails, its microscopic curly toes, and solemn black eyes—when they showed, its inimitable stillness when it slept, its incredible vigour when it fed, were all, as it were, miraculous. Withal, she had a feeling of gratitude to one who had not killed nor even hurt her so very desperately—gratitude because she had succeeded, performed her part of mother perfectly—the nurse had said so—she, so distrustful of herself! Instinctively she knew, too, that this was *her* baby, not his, going "to take after her," as they called it. How it succeeded in giving that impression she could not tell, unless by its passivity, and dark eyes. From one till three they had slept together with perfect soundness and unanimity. She awoke to find the nurse standing by the bed, looking as if she wanted to tell her something.

"Someone to see you, my dear."

Gyp thought: 'He! I don't know—I don't know.' Her face expressed this, for the nurse said at once:

"Are you quite up to it?"

"Yes. Only, not for five minutes, please."

Her spirit had been very far away, she wanted time before she saw him—to know in some sort what she felt now; what this mite lying beside her had done for her and him. It was his, too—this tiny, helpless being. No, it was not his! He had not wanted it, and now that she had been through the torture, it was hers, not his—never his. Then came the old accusing thought: 'But I married him—I chose to marry him. I can't get out of that!' And she felt as if she must cry out to the nurse: 'Keep him away; I don't want to see him.' She forced the words back, and said:

"Now, I'm ready."

She noticed his clothes first—a dark grey suit, with little lighter lines—she had chosen it herself; his tie was in a bow, not a sailor's knot, his hair brighter than usual—as always just after being cut; and surely the hair was growing down again in front of his ears. Then, almost with emotion, she realised that his whole face was quivering. He came in on tiptoe, crossed very swiftly to the bed, very swiftly knelt down, and, taking her hand, turned it over and put his face to it. The bristles of his moustache tickled her palm; his nose flattened itself against her fingers, and his lips kept murmuring words into the hand, with the moist warm touch of his lips. Gyp knew he was burying there all his remorse, the excesses, perhaps, he had committed while she had been away from him, burying the fears he had felt, and the emotion at seeing her so white and still. In a minute he would raise a quite different face. 'Why don't I love him?' she thought. 'There's something lovable. Why don't I?'

His eyes lighted on the baby; he was grinning.

"Oh, my Gyp, what a funny one! Oh, oh, oh!" His face slowly puckered into comic disgust. Gyp too had seen the humours of her baby, its little reddish pudge of a face, its twenty-seven black hairs, the dribble at its almost invisible mouth; but she had also seen it as a

miracle; and there surged up in her all the old revolt against his lack of consideration. It was not funny—her baby—not ugly! Or, if so, she was not fit to be told of it Fiorsen put his finger out and touched its cheek.

"It *is* real—so it is. Mademoiselle Fiorsen. Tk, tk!"

The baby stirred. And Gyp thought: 'If I loved him, I wouldn't mind his laughing at my baby. It would be different.'

"Don't wake her!" she whispered, felt his eyes on her, and knew that his interest in the baby had ceased and he was thinking, 'How long before I have you in my arms again?' And, suddenly, she had a sinking sensation that she had never yet known. When she opened her eyes again, the nurse was holding something beneath her nose and muttering: "Well, I am a d——d fool!" Fiorsen was gone.

Seeing Gyp's eyes once more open, the nurse withdrew the ammonia, replaced the baby, and saying: "Now go to sleep!" withdrew behind the screen. Like all robust personalities, she visited on others her vexations with herself. But Gyp did not sleep; she gazed at her sleeping baby, and at the pattern of the wall-paper, trying mechanically to find the bird caught at intervals amongst its brown-and-green foliage—one bird in each alternate square of the pattern, so that there was always a bird in the centre of four other birds. And the bird was of green and yellow with a red beak.

On being turned out of the nursery with the assurance that it was "only a little faint," Fiorsen went downstairs disconsolate. This dark house where he was an unwelcome stranger was insupportable. He wanted nothing in it but Gyp, and Gyp had fainted at his touch. He opened a door. A piano! The drawing-room. Ugh! No fire —what misery! He recoiled to the doorway and stood listening. Not a sound. Grey light in the cheerless room; dark already in the hall behind him. What a life these English lived—worse than the winter in his old country

home in Sweden, where, at all events, they kept good fires. And, suddenly, he revolted. Stay here and face that father! Stay here for a night of this! Gyp was not his Gyp, lying there with that baby beside her, in this hostile house. Smothering his footsteps, he made for the outer hall. There were his coat and hat. He put them on. His bag? He could not see it. No matter! They could send it after him. He would write—say that her fainting had upset him—that he could not risk making her faint again, nor stay in the house so near her, yet so far. She would understand. And there came over him a sudden wave of longing. Gyp! He wanted her. To look at her and kiss her, and feel her his own again! And, opening the door, he passed out on to the drive and strode away, very miserable and sick at heart. All the way to the station through the darkening lanes, and in the railway carriage going up, he felt that aching wretchedness. Only in the lighted street, driving back to Rosek's, did he shake it off a little. At dinner and after, he nearly lost it; but it came back again, till sleep relieved him with its darkness and dreams.

XII

Gyp's recovery proceeded at first with a sure rapidity which delighted Winton. As the nurse said: She was beautifully made, and that had a lot to do with it!

Before Christmas Day, she was already out, and on Christmas morning the old doctor, by way of present, pronounced her fit to go home when she liked. That afternoon, she was not so well, and next day back again upstairs. Nothing seemed definitely wrong with her save a desperate lassitude; as if the knowledge that to go back only needed her decision, had been too much for her. And, since no one knew her inward feelings, all were puzzled except Winton. The nursing of her child was promptly stopped.

Not till the middle of January did she say to him:

"I must go home, Dad."

The word "home" hurt, and he only answered:

"Very well, Gyp; when?"

"The house is quite ready. I think I had better go to-morrow. He's still at Rosek's. I won't let him know. Two or three days there by myself first would be better for settling baby in."

"Very well; I'll take you up."

He made no effort to ascertain her feelings towards Fiorsen. He knew them too well.

They travelled next day, reaching London at half-past two. The installation of Betty and the baby in the spare room that was now to be the nursery, absorbed all her first energies. Light was just beginning to fail when, still in her fur, she took a key of the music-room and crossed the garden, to see how all had fared during her ten weeks' absence. What a wintry garden! How different from that languorous, warm, moonlit night when Daphne Wing had come dancing out of the shadow of the dark trees. Bare and sharp the boughs against the grey, darkening sky—not a song of any bird, not a flower! She glanced back at the house. It looked cold and white,

but there were lights in her room and in the nursery, and someone just drawing the curtains. The leaves were off, she could see the other houses of the road, each different in shape and colour, as is the habit of London houses. It was cold, frosty; she hurried down the path. Four little icicles had formed beneath the window of the music-room, and she broke one off. There must be a fire in there, she could see the flicker through the curtains not quite drawn. Thoughtful Ellen had been airing it! And, suddenly, she stood still. Through the chink in the drawn curtains she had seen two figures seated on the divan. Something spun round in her head. Then, with a kind of deadly coolness, she deliberately looked in. He and Daphne Wing! His arm was round the girl's neck, her face turned back and up, gazing at him, the lips parted, the eyes hypnotised, adoring.

Gyp raised her hand. For a second it hovered close to the glass. With a sick feeling, she dropped it and turned away.

Never would she show him or that girl that they could hurt her! They were safe from any scene she would make—safe in their nest! And, across the frosty grass, through the unlighted drawing-room, she went upstairs, locked her door, and sat down before the fire. Pride raged within her. She stuffed her handkerchief between her teeth and lips, unconsciously. Her eyes felt scorched from the fire-flames, but she did not trouble to hold her hand before them.

Suppose she had loved him! The handkerchief dropped; she looked at it with wonder—bloodstained. Away from the scorching of the fire, she sat quite still, a smile on her lips. That girl's eyes, like a little adoring dog's—that girl, who had fawned on her so! She had got her "distinguished man"! She sprang up and looked at herself in the glass. In her own house! Why not here—in this room? Why not before her eyes? Not yet a year married! It was almost funny—almost funny! And she had her first calm thought: 'I am free.'

But it did not seem to mean anything to a spirit so stricken in its pride. She moved closer to the fire again. Why had she not tapped on the window? To have seen that girl's face ashy with fright! To have seen him—caught—in the room she had made beautiful for him, where she had played for him so many hours! How long had they used it for their meetings—sneaking in by that door from the back lane? Perhaps even before she went away—to bear his child! And there began in her a struggle between mother instinct and the sense of outrage—a dumb tug-of-war—would she feel her baby all hers now, or would it have slipped away from her heart, and be a thing almost abhorrent?

She huddled nearer the fire, cold and physically sick, with the thought: 'If I don't let the servants know I'm here, they might go out and see what I saw!' Had she shut the drawing-room window when she returned? She rang the bell and unlocked the door. The maid came up.

"Please shut the drawing-room window, Ellen; and tell Betty I'm afraid I got a little chill travelling. I'm going to bed. Ask her if she can manage with baby." The girl's face wore an expression of concern, even of commiseration, but not that fluttered look which must have been there if she had known.

"Yes, m'm; I'll get you a hot-water bottle, m'm. Would you like a hot bath and a cup of hot tea at once?"

Gyp nodded. Anything! And when the maid was gone, she thought: 'A cup of hot tea! What should it be but hot?'

The maid came back with the tea; she was an affectionate girl, who admired Gyp, and was her partisan in a household which lacked unity. The mistress was much too good for him—a foreigner—and such 'abits! Manners—he hadn't any! And no good would come of it. Not if you took her opinion!

"I've turned the water in, m'm. Will you have a little mustard in it?"

And, going downstairs for the mustard, she told cook:

"There's that about the mistress that makes you quite pathetic." The cook, fingering her concertina, for which she had a passion, answered:

"She 'ides up her feelin's. Thank 'eaven she haven't got that drawl that 'er old aunt 'as—always makes me feel to want to say, 'Buck up, old dear, you ain't 'alf that precious.'"

And, drawing out her concertina to its full length, with cautionary softness she began to practise "Home, Sweet Home!"

To Gyp, lying in her hot bath, those muffled strains mounted, like the far-away humming of large flies. The heat of the water, the pungent smell of the mustard, and that droning hum slowly soothed and drowsed away the vehemence of feeling. Some day she, too, would love! Strange that she should feel that at such a moment! Yes: some day love would come to her. And there floated before her the adoring look on Daphne Wing's face, the shiver that had passed along her arm. Pity crept into her heart—half-bitter, half-admiring. Why should she grudge—she who did not love? The sound, like the humming of large flies, grew deeper, more vibrating. Cook in her passion was swelling out her music on the phrase,

"*Be it ne-e-ver so humble,*
There's no-o place like home!"

XIII

That night Gyp slept as though nothing had happened and there were no future at all before her. She woke into misery. Her pride would force her to keep an unmoved face and live an unmoved life; but the struggle between mother instinct and revolt was still going on. She was afraid to see her baby.

She got up at noon and stole downstairs. She had not realised quite how violent was her struggle over *his* child till she was passing the door of the room where it was lying. If she had not been ordered to give up nursing, that struggle would never have come. Her heart ached, but a demon drove her past the door. Downstairs she pottered round, dusting her china, putting in order the books which, after house-cleaning, the maid had arranged almost too carefully, so that the first volumes of Dickens and Thackeray followed each other on the top shelf, and the second volumes followed each other on the bottom shelf. And all the time she thought: 'What do I care how the place looks? It is not my home. It can never be my home!'

For lunch she drank beef tea, keeping up the fiction of indisposition. After that, she sat down to write. Something must be decided! But nothing came—not one word—not even the way to address him. The maid brought a note from Aunt Rosamund, and the dogs, who fell frantically on their mistress and began to fight for her possession. She went on her knees to separate them, and their avid tongues furiously licked her cheeks. At those kisses the band round her heart gave way; she was overwhelmed with longing for her baby. And, followed by the dogs, she went upstairs.

Gyp wrote a postcard that evening:

"We are back."

He would not get it till he woke about eleven; and with the instinct to take all the respite she could, she wandered about all day shopping and trying not to think. Returning

at tea-time, she went straight up to her baby. He had come, and gone out with his violin to the music-room.

Gyp needed all her self-control. Soon the girl would come fluttering down that dark, narrow lane; perhaps at this very minute her fingers were tapping at the door, and he was opening it to murmur: "No; she's back!" Ah, then the girl would shrink! The rapid whispering—some other meeting-place! Lips to lips, and that look on the girl's face; till she hurried away from the shut door, in the darkness, disappointed! And he, on that silver-and-gold divan, gnawing his moustache, his eyes—catlike—staring at the fire! And then, perhaps, from his violin would come one of those swaying bursts of sound, with tears in them, and the wind in them, that had of old bewitched her!

"Open the window just a little, Betty dear—it's hot."

Music—rising, falling! Why did it so move one even when it was the voice of insult! And she thought: 'He will expect me to go out there again and play for him. But I will not, never!'

She went into her bedroom, changed hastily into a tea-gown, and went down. A little china shepherdess on the mantelshelf attracted her attention. She had bought it three and more years ago, when she first came to London and life seemed just a long cotillon, with herself for leader. It seemed now the cool and dainty symbol of another world, without depths or shadows—not a happy world!

She had not long to wait before he tapped on the drawing-room window. Why did faces gazing in through glass from darkness always look hungry—searching, appealing for what you had and they had not? And while undoing the latch she thought: 'What am I going to say?' The ardour of his gaze, voice, hands, seemed to her comic; even more comically false his look of disappointment when she said:

"Please take care; I'm still brittle. Have you had a good time at Count Rosek's?" And, without her will,

the words slipped out: "I'm afraid you've missed the music-room!"

His stare wavered; he began to walk up and down.

"Missed! Missed everything! I have been very miserable, Gyp. You've no idea how miserable. Yes, miserable, miserable!" With each repetition of the word his voice grew gayer. And kneeling down, he stretched his long arms round her: "Ah, my Gyp! I shall be a different being, now."

Gyp went on smiling. Between that, and stabbing these false raptures to the heart, there seemed nothing she could do. The moment his hands relaxed, she got up and said:

"You know there's a baby in the house?"

"Ah, the baby! I'd forgotten. Let's go up and see it."

Gyp answered:

"You go."

She could feel him thinking: 'Perhaps it will make her nice to me!' He turned suddenly and went.

She stood with eyes shut, seeing the divan in the music-room and the girl's arm shivering. Then, going to the piano, she began to play a polonaise.

That evening they dined out, and went to "The Tales of Hofmann." By such devices it was possible to put off a little longer what she was going to do. During the drive home in the dark cab, she shrank away into her corner, pretending that his arm would hurt her dress. Twice she was on the point of crying out: "I am not Daphne Wing!" But each time pride strangled the words. And yet what other reason could she find to keep him from her room?

But when in her mirror she saw him standing behind her—he had crept into the bedroom like a cat—the blood rushed up in her face, and she said:

"No, Gustav, go out to the music-room if you want a companion."

He recoiled against the foot of the bed and stared at

her; and Gyp, before her mirror, went on quietly taking the pins out of her hair. She could see him moving his head and hands as though in pain. Then, to her surprise, he went. And a vague compunction confused her sense of deliverance. She lay awake a long time, watching the fire-glow brighten and darken on the ceiling, while tunes from "The Tales of Hofmann" ran in her head, and thoughts and fancies criss-crossed in her excited brain. Falling asleep at last, she dreamed she was feeding doves, and one of them was Daphne Wing. She woke with a start. By the firelight she saw him crouching at the foot of the bed, as on their wedding night—the same hungry yearning in his face, and an arm outstretched. Before she could speak, he began:

"Oh, Gyp, you don't understand! All that is nothing—it is only you I want. I am a fool who cannot control himself. Think! It's a long time since you went away from me."

Gyp said, in a hard voice:

"I didn't want to have a child."

"No; but now you have it, you are glad. Don't be unmerciful, my Gyp! It is like you to be merciful. That girl—it is all over—I swear—I promise."

Gyp thought: 'Why does he come and whine to me like this? He has no dignity—none!'

"How can you promise? You have made the girl love you. I saw her face."

"You saw her?"

"Yes."

"She is a little fool. I do not care for the whole of her as much as I care for your one finger. What does it matter if one does not care? The soul, not the body, is faithful."

Gyp said:

"It matters when it makes others miserable."

"Has it made you miserable, my Gyp?"

His voice had a ring of hope. She answered, startled:

"I? No—her."

"Her? It is experience—it is life. It will do her no harm."

"No; nothing will do anybody harm if it gives you pleasure."

At that bitter retort, he kept silence a long time, now and then heaving a long sigh. 'The soul, not the body, is faithful!' Was he, after all, more faithful to her than she had ever been, could ever be—who did not love, had never loved him? What right had she to talk, who had married him out of vanity, out of—what?

And suddenly he said:

"Gyp! Forgive!"

She sighed, and turned away her face.

He bent down against the eiderdown. She could hear him drawing long, sobbing breaths, and in the midst of her lassitude and hopelessness, a sort of pity stirred her. What did it matter? She said, in a choked voice:

"Very well, I forgive."

XIV

Gyp never really believed that Daphne Wing was of the past. Her sceptical instinct told her that what Fiorsen might honestly mean to do was very different from what he would do under stress of opportunity carefully put within his reach.

Since her return, Rosek had begun to come again, careful not to repeat his mistake, but not deceiving her at all. Though his self-control was as great as Fiorsen's was small, she felt he had not given up his pursuit of her, and would take very good care that Daphne Wing was afforded every chance of being with her husband. But pride never let her allude to the girl. Besides, what good to speak of her? They would both lie—Rosek, because he obviously saw the mistaken line of his first attack; Fiorsen, because his temperament did not permit him to suffer by speaking the truth.

Having set herself to endure, she lived in the moment, never thinking of the future, never thinking much of anything. She gave herself up to her baby. In watching, and feeling it warm against her, she succeeded in reaching the hypnotic state of mothers. But the baby slept a great deal, and much of its time was claimed by Betty. Those hours were difficult. If she read, she began at once to brood. She was cut off from the music-room, had not crossed its threshold since her discovery. Aunt Rosamund's efforts to take her into society were fruitless, and, though her father came, he never stayed long for fear of meeting Fiorsen. In this condition of affairs, she turned more and more to her own music, and one morning, having unearthed some compositions of her girlhood, she made a resolution. That afternoon she sallied forth into the February frost.

Monsieur Edouard Harmost inhabited the ground floor of a house in the Marylebone Road. He received his pupils in a large back room overlooking a little sooty garden. A Walloon by extraction, and of great vitality,

he grew old with difficulty, preserving a soft corner in his heart for women, and a passion for novelty, even for new music.

When Gyp was shown into this well-remembered room, he was seated, with his yellow fingers buried in his stiff grey hair. He stared at Gyp.

"Aha!" he said, "my little friend! She has come back!" And, making for the mantelpiece, he took therefrom a bunch of Parma violets, brought by his last pupil, and thrust them under her nose. "Take them, take them. How much have you forgotten? Come!" And, seizing her by the elbow, he almost forced her to the piano. "Take off your furs. Sit down!"

And while Gyp was taking off her coat, he fixed on her his prominent brown eyes from under their squared eyelids and cliffs of brow. She had on what Fiorsen called her "humming-bird" blouse—dark blue, shot with peacock and old rose, and looked very warm and soft. Monsieur Harmost's stare seemed to drink her in, with the rather sad yearning of old men who love beauty and know that their time for seeing it is getting short.

"Play me the 'Carnival,'" he said. "We shall soon see!"

Gyp played. He nodded; tapped his fingers on his teeth, showed the whites of his eyes—which meant: "That will have to be very different!" And once he grunted. When she had finished, he sat down beside her, took her hand in his, and, examining the fingers, began:

"Yes, yes! Spoiling yourself, playing for that fiddler! *Trop sympathique!* The backbone, the backbone—we shall improve that. Four hours a day for six weeks—and we shall have something again."

"I have a baby, Monsieur Harmost."

"What! That is a tragedy!" Gyp shook her head. "You like it? A baby! Does it not squall?"

"Very little."

"*Mon Dieu!* Well, you are still beautiful. That is something. Now, what can you do with this baby?

Could you get rid of it a little? This is a talent in danger. A fiddler, and a baby! *C'est beaucoup! C'est trop!*"

Gyp smiled. And Monsieur Harmost, whose exterior covered much sensibility, stroked her hand.

"You have grown up, my little friend," he said gravely. "Never mind; nothing is wasted. But a baby! Well; courage! We shall do things yet!"

Gyp turned her head away to hide the quivering of her lips. The scent of latakia tobacco which had soaked into things, of old books and music, a dark smell, like Monsieur Harmost's complexion; the old brown curtains, the sooty little back garden beyond, with its cat-runs, and its one stunted sumach tree; the dark-brown stare of Monsieur Harmost's rolling eyes—all brought back that time of happiness, when she used to come week after week, full of gaiety and importance, and chatter away, basking in his brusque admiration and in music, with the glamourous feeling that she was making him happy, and herself happy, and going to play finely some day.

The voice of Monsieur Harmost boomed on, soft and gruff.

"Come, come! The only thing we cannot cure is age. You were right to come, my child. If things are not all they ought to be, you shall soon forget. In music—in music, we can get away. After all, my little friend, they cannot take our dreams from us—not even a wife, not even a husband can do that. We shall have good times yet!"

From those who serve art devoutly radiates a kind of glamour. She left Monsieur Harmost that afternoon infected by his passion for music. Poetic justice—on which all homeopathy is founded—would try and cure her life by a dose of what had spoiled it. To music she now gave all the hours she could spare. She went to him twice a week, though uneasy at the expense, for monetary conditions were ever more embarrassed. At home, she practised steadily and worked hard at composition. She finished several songs and studies during the spring and

summer, and left still more unfinished. Monsieur Harmost was tolerant, seeming to know that harsh criticism would cut her impulse down, as frost cuts the life of flowers. Besides, there was something fresh and individual in her compositions.

"What does your husband think of these?" he asked one day.

"I don't show them to him."

She never had; she dreaded his ruthlessness when anything grated on his nerves—a breath of mockery would wither her belief in herself, frail enough plant already. The only person, besides her master, to whom she confided her efforts was—strangely enough—Rosek. He had surprised her one day copying out some music. The warmth with which he praised that little "caprice" was surely genuine; and she gratefully played him others, and then a song for him to sing. From that day she began to have for him a certain friendliness, to be a little sorry, watching him, pale, trim, and sphinxlike, in her drawing-room or garden, getting no nearer to the fulfilment of his desire. He had never again made love to her, though she knew that at the least sign he would. His face and his invincible patience were pathetic. She could not actively dislike one who admired her so much. She consulted him about Fiorsen's debts. There were hundreds of pounds owing, besides much to Rosek himself. *How* did he get into debt like this? What became of the money he earned? His fees, this summer, were good. Was it on that girl, on other women, that he spent it?

Watching Fiorsen closely, she was conscious of a change, a sort of loosening, something in him had given way—as when, in winding a watch, the key turns on and on, the ratchet being broken. Yet he was working harder than ever. She would hear him, across the garden, going over and over a passage, as if he never would be satisfied. But his playing had lost its fire and sweep; was stale, and as if disillusioned; as though he had said to himself: "What's the use?" In his face, too, there was a change.

She knew—she was certain that he was drinking secretly. Was it his failure with her? Was it the girl? Or simply heredity from a hard-drinking ancestry?

Gyp never faced these questions. To face them would mean useless discussion, useless admission that she could not love him, useless asseverations about the girl, useless denials of all sorts. Hopeless!

He was very irritable, and seemed to resent her music lessons, alluding to them with a sneering impatience. She felt that he despised them as amateurish. He was often impatient, too, of the time she gave to the baby. His own conduct with the little creature was characteristic. He would go to the nursery, much to Betty's alarm, and be charming to the baby for about ten minutes, then dump it back into its cradle, stare at it gloomily, or utter a laugh, and go out. Sometimes he would come up when Gyp was there, and after watching her a little in silence, would drag her away.

Suffering always from the consciousness of having no love for him, and ever more from her sense that, instead of saving him, she was pushing him down-hill—ironical nemesis for vanity!—Gyp was more and more compliant to his demands on her. But this compliance, when all the time she felt further and further away, was straining her to breaking-point. Hers was a nature that passively endures till something snaps; after that—no more.

That spring and summer were like a long drought, with moisture gathering far away, coming nearer, nearer, till, at last, the deluge bursts and sweeps the garden.

XV

The tenth of July that year was as the first day of summer. There had been much fine weather, always easterly or northerly; but now, after a broken, rainy fortnight, the sun had come in full summer warmth with a gentle breeze, drifting here and there scent of opening lime-blossom. Under the trees at the far end of the garden, Betty was sewing a garment, and the baby was in her seventh morning sleep. Gyp stood before a bed of sweet peas—bright, frail growing things, whose little green tridents, branching out from the flat stems, resembled the antennæ of insects.

The sound of footsteps on the gravel made her turn to see Rosek coming from the drawing-room. He bowed, and said:

"Gustav is not up yet. I thought I would speak to you first. Can we talk?"

Hesitating just a second, Gyp drew off her gardening-gloves.

"Here? Or in the drawing-room?"

"In the drawing-room, please."

With a faint tremor she led the way, seating herself where she could see Betty and the baby. Rosek stood very still—the sweetish gravity of his well-cut lips and spotless dandyism, stirred in her a kind of unwilling admiration.

"What is it?"

"A bad business, I'm afraid. Something must be done at once. I have been trying to arrange things, but they will not wait. They are even threatening to sell up this house."

With a sense of outrage, Gyp cried:

"Nearly everything here is mine."

Rosek shook his head.

"The lease is in his name—you are his wife. They can do it, I assure you. And I cannot help him any more—just now."

"No—of course! You ought not to have helped

him at all. I can't bear—— How much does he owe altogether?"

"About thirteen hundred pounds. It isn't much, of course. But there is something else——"

"Worse?"

Rosek nodded.

"You will think again that I am trying to make capital out of it. I cannot afford that you should think that, this time."

Gyp shook her head.

"No; tell me, please."

"There is a man called Wagge, an undertaker—the father of someone you know——"

"Daphne Wing?"

"Yes. A child is coming. They have made her tell. It means the cancelling of her engagements, of course—and other things."

Gyp said slowly:

"Can you tell me, please, what this Mr.—Wagge can do?"

"He is rabid—a rabid man of his class is dangerous. A lot of money will be wanted—some blood, perhaps."

He moved swiftly to her, and said very low:

"Gyp, it is a year since I told you of this. You did not believe me then. I told you, too, that I loved you. I love you more, now, a hundred times! Don't move! I am going up to Gustav."

He turned, and Gyp thought he was really going; but he stopped and came back past the line of the window. The expression of his face was so hungry, that, for a moment, she felt pity. It must have shown in her face, for he suddenly caught at her, and tried to kiss her lips; she wrenched back, and he could only reach her throat. Letting her go as suddenly, he bent his head and went out.

Gyp wiped his kisses off her throat with the back of her hand, dumbly, thinking: 'What have I done to be treated like this? What *have* I done?' And rage against all men flared up in her. Going to her bureau, she took

out her address book and looked for the name: Wing—Frankland Street, Fulham. Unhooking her little bag from off the back of the chair, she put her cheque-book into it. Then, taking care to make no sound, she passed into the hall, caught up her sunshade, and went out.

She walked quickly towards Baker Street. She had come out without gloves, and went into the first shop to buy a pair. In choosing them she forgot her emotions for a minute. Out in the street again, they came back bitterly. And the day was so beautiful—the sun bright, the sky blue, the clouds dazzling white; from the top of her bus she could see all its brilliance. She remembered the man who had kissed her arm at her first ball. And now—this! Mixed with her rage was a sort of unwilling compassion and fellow-feeling for that girl, that silly, sugar-plum girl, brought to such a pass by—her husband. In Fulham, she got down at the nearest corner, walked up a widish street of narrow grey houses till she came to the number. On that newly-scrubbed step, she very nearly turned and fled. What exactly had she come to do?

The door was opened by a servant in an untidy frock. Mutton! The smell of mutton—just as the girl had said!

"Is Miss—Miss Daphne Wing at home?"

"Yes; Miss Disey's in. D'you want to see 'er? What nyme?"

Then, opening the first of two brown doors, she said:

"Tyke a seat; I'll fetch her."

In the middle of that dining-room, Gyp tried to subdue the sense of nausea. The table against which her hand rested was covered with red baize, to keep the stains of mutton from penetrating to the wood. On a mahogany sideboard reposed a cruet-stand and a green dish of very red apples. A bamboo-framed talc screen painted with white and yellow marguerites stood before a fireplace filled with pampas-grass dyed red. The chairs were of red morocco, the curtains a brownish-red, the walls green, and on them hung a set of Landseer prints. This red and green in juxtaposition added to her distress. And, suddenly, her

eyes lighted on a little deep-blue china bowl. It stood on a black stand on the mantelpiece, with nothing in it. In this room, with the smell of mutton creeping in, that bowl was from another world. Daphne Wing—not Daisy Wagge—had surely put it there! And it touched her—emblem of stifled beauty, of all that the girl had tried to pour out in her garden nearly a year ago. Thin Eastern china, good and beautiful! A wonder they allowed it to pollute this room!

A sigh made her turn. Back to the door, with a white, scared face, the girl was standing. Gyp thought: 'She has suffered horribly'; and held out her hand.

Daphne Wing sighed out: "Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen!" and kissed it. Gyp saw that her new glove was wet. Then the girl relapsed against the door. Gyp was swept again by rage against men, and fellow-feeling for one about to go through what she herself had just endured.

"It's all right," she said, gently; "only, what's to be done?"

Daphne Wing put her hands up over her white face and sobbed—so quietly but so terribly that Gyp herself had the utmost difficulty not to cry. This was the real despair of a creature bereft of hope and strength, above all, of love—such weeping as is drawn from suffering souls only by the touch of fellow-feeling. It filled her with rage against Fiorsen, who had taken this girl for his pleasure and then thrown her away. She seemed to see him discarding her for cloying his senses and getting on his nerves, discarding her with caustic words, to abide alone the consequences of infatuation. She timidly stroked that shaking shoulder. The girl said brokenly:

"Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen, I do love him so!" A painful wish to laugh seized Gyp, making her shiver from head to foot. Daphne Wing saw it, and went on: "I know—it's awful: but I do—and now he——" Her quiet but really dreadful sobbing broke out again. And again Gyp began stroking her shoulder. "And I have been so awful to you! Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen, do forgive me, please!"

"Yes, yes; that's nothing! Don't cry!"

Very slowly the sobbing died away, but still the girl held her hands over her face and her face down. The red and green room, the smell of mutton—creeping!

At last, a little of that white face showed; the lips, no longer craving for sugar-plums, murmured:

"It's you he—he—really loves all the time. And you don't love him—that's so funny. Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen, if I could just see him! He told me never to come again; and I haven't dared. I haven't seen him for three weeks—not since I told him about *it*. Oh! What shall I do?"

Gyp felt pity and yet violent revolt that any girl should want to crawl back to a man who had spurned her. Daphne Wing said piteously:

"I don't seem to have any pride. I don't mind what he does to me, or what he says, if only I can see him."

Gyp's revolt yielded to her pity.

"How long before——?"

"Three months."

Three months—in this state of misery!

"I shall do something desperate. Now that I can't dance, and *they* know, it's too awful! If I could see him, I wouldn't mind anything. But I know he'll never want me again. Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen, I wish I was dead! I do!"

A heavy sigh escaped Gyp, and, bending suddenly, she kissed the girl's forehead. Still that scent of orange-blossom about her skin or hair, as when she asked whether she ought to have a lover or not; as when she came, moth-like, from the tree-shade into the moonlight, spun, and fluttered, with her shadow fluttering before her. To relieve the strain, she pointed to the bowl and said:

"*You* put that there, I'm sure."

The girl answered, with piteous eagerness:

"Oh, would you like it? Do take it. Count Rosek gave it me. Oh, that's papa. He'll be coming in!"

Gyp heard a man clearing his throat, and the rattle of an umbrella falling into a stand; the girl wilted and shrank against the sideboard. The door opened; Mr. Wagge

entered, short, thick, in a black frock-coat and trousers, and a greyish beard. He looked exactly what he was, an English chapel-goer, nourished on sherry and mutton, who could and did make his own way in the world. His features, coloured by a deep liverishness, were thick, like his body, and not ill-natured, except for the anger in his small, piggy grey eyes. In a voice permanently gruff, but impregnated with professional ingratiation, he said:

"Ye-es? Whom 'ave I——?"

"Mrs. Fiorsen."

The sound of his breathing could be heard distinctly; he twisted a chair round.

"Take a seat, won't you?"

Gyp shook her head.

In Mr. Wagge's face deference struggled with some more primitive emotion. Taking out a large, black-edged handkerchief, he blew his nose, passed it freely over his visage, and turning to his daughter, muttered:

"Go upstairs."

The girl turned quickly and went out. Mr. Wagge cleared his throat with a sound suggestive of enormously thick linings.

"May I ask what 'as given us the honour?"

"I came to see your daughter."

His little eyes travelled from her face to her feet, to his own watch-chain, to his hands rubbing themselves together, to her breast, higher than which they dared not mount. Their infinite embarrassment struck Gyp. She could almost hear him thinking: 'Now, how can I discuss this with that attractive young female, wife of the scoundrel who's ruined my daughter? Delicate—that's what it is!' The words burst hoarsely from him.

"It's an unpleasant business, ma'am. I don't know what to say. Reelly I don't. It's awkward; very awkward."

Gyp said quietly:

"Your daughter is desperately unhappy; that can't be good for her just now."

Mr. Wagge's thick figure seemed to swell.

"Pardon me, ma'am," he spluttered, "but I *must* call your 'usband a scoundrel. I'm sorry to be impolite, but I must do it. If I had 'im 'ere, I don't know that I should be able to control myself—I don't indeed." Apparently interpreting a movement of her hand as sympathy, he went on in a stream of husky utterance: "It's delicate before a lady, and she the injured party; but one has feelings. From the first I said this dancin' was in the face of Providence; but women have no more sense than an egg. Her mother, she would have it. Career, indeed! Pretty career! I tell you, ma'am, I'm angry; if that scoundrel comes within reach of me, I shall mark 'im—I'm not a young man, but I shall mark 'im. An' what to say to you, I don't know. That my daughter should be'ave like that! Well, it's 'urt me. An' now I suppose her name 'll be dragged in the mud. I tell you frankly, I 'oped you wouldn't hear of it, because after all the girl's got her punishment. And this divorce court—it's not nice—it's an 'orrible thing for respectable people. And, mind you, I won't see my girl married to that scoundrel, not if you do divorce 'im. No; she'll have her disgrace for nothing."

Gyp raised her head, and said:

"There'll be no public disgrace, Mr. Wagge, unless you make it yourself. If you send Daphne—Daisy—quietly away somewhere till her trouble's over, no one need know anything."

Mr. Wagge's mouth opened slightly, his breathing could have been heard in the street.

"Do I understand you to say that you're not goin' to take proceedings, ma'am?"

Gyp inclined her head.

Mr. Wagge stood silent, slightly moving his pug face.

"Well," he said, at length, "it's more than she deserves; but I don't disguise it's a relief to me. And I must say, in a young lady like you, and handsome, it shows a Christian spirit." Again Gyp shook her head.

"Ah! but it do. As a man old enough to be your father —and a regular attendant."

He held out his hand. Gyp put her gloved hand into it.

"I'm very, very sorry. Please be nice to her."

Mr. Wagge stood for some seconds ruefully rubbing his hands together.

"I'm a domestic man," he said suddenly. "A domestic man in a serious line of life; and I never thought to have anything like this in my family—never! It's been—well, I can't tell you what it's been!"

Gyp took up her sunshade. She felt that she must get away; at any moment he might say something she could not bear—and the smell of mutton rising fast!

"I am sorry," she said again; "good-bye;" and moved past him to the door. She heard him breathing hard as he followed her to open it; he passed her and put his hand on the latch of the front door. His piggy eyes scanned her almost timidly.

"Well," he said, "I'm very glad to have the privilege of your acquaintance; and, if I may say so, you 'ave my 'earty sympathy. Good-day."

Gyp took a long breath. Her cheeks were burning; and, with a craving for protection, she put up her sunshade. But the girl's white face came up again before her, and the sound of her words:

"Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen, I wish I was dead! I *do!*"

XVI

She walked on beneath her sunshade, making unconsciously for the peace of trees. Her mind was a whirl—Daphne Wing against the door, Mr. Wagge's puggy countenance, the red pampas-grass, the blue bowl, Rosek swooping at her, her baby asleep under the trees!

She reached Kensington Gardens, and sat down. It was near the luncheon hour; nursemaids, dogs, perambulators, old gentlemen—all were hurrying toward their food. They glanced at this pretty young woman, leisured and lonely at such an hour, trying to find out what was wrong with her beauty—bow legs, or something, to balance a face like that! Gyp noticed none of them, except now and again a dog which sniffed her knees in passing. For so long she had cultivated insensibility, refused to face reality; but the barrier was forced now, and the flood had swept her away. "Proceedings!" To those who shrink from letting their affairs be known even by their nearest friends, the notion of a public exhibition of troubles simply never comes; it had certainly never come to Gyp. With a bitter smile she thought: 'I'm better off than she is, after all! Suppose I loved him, too? No, I never—never—want to love. Women who love suffer too much."

She sat a long time before remembering that she was due at Monsieur Harmost's at three o'clock. It was well past two already; and she set out across the grass. The day was full of murmurings of bees and flies, cooings of pigeons, soft swish and stir of leaves, the scent of lime-blossom under a sky blue, with a few white clouds slow and calm and full. Why be unhappy? And one of those spotted spaniel dogs which have broad heads, with frizzy topknots, and are always rascals, circled her, hoping she would throw her sunshade on the water for him to fetch, in his view the only reason why anything was carried in the hand.

Monsieur Harmost was fidgeting about his room, whose opened windows could not rid it of the scent of latakia.

"I thought you were not coming!" he said. "You look pale. Is it the heat? Or"—he looked hard into her face—"has someone hurt you, my little friend?" Gyp shook her head. "Ah! yes, you tell me nothing; you tell nobody nothing! You close up your pretty face like a flower at night. At your age, my child, one should make confidences; a secret grief is to music as the east wind to the stomach. Come, tell me your troubles. For a long time I have been meaning to ask. We are only once young; I want to see you happy."

Would it be a relief to pour her soul out? His brown eyes questioned her like an old dog's. She did not want to hurt one so kind. And yet—impossible!

Monsieur Harmost sat down at the piano. Resting his hands on the keys, he looked round at her.

"I am in love with you, you know. Old men can be very much in love, but they know it is no good—that makes them endurable. Still, we like to feel of use to youth and beauty; it gives us a little warmth. Tell me your grief!" He waited a moment, then said irritably: "Well, well, we go to music then!"

It was his habit to sit by her at the piano, but to-day he stood as if prepared to be exceptionally severe. And Gyp played, whether from over-excited nerves or from not having had any lunch, better than she had ever played—the Chopin polonaise in A flat, that song of revolution, which had always seemed so unattainable. When she had finished, Monsieur Harmost lifted one of her hands and put his lips to it. She felt the scrub of his little bristly beard, and raised her face with a sigh of satisfaction. A voice behind them said mockingly:

"Bravo!"

Fiorsen stood in the doorway.

"Congratulations, *madame!* I have long wanted to see you under the inspiration of your—master!"

Gyp's heart began to beat. Monsieur Harmost had not moved. His eyes were startled.

Fiorsen kissed the back of his own hand.

"This old Pantaloon! Pho—what a lover!"

Gyp saw the old man quiver; she sprang up, crying: "You brute!"

Monsieur Harmost's voice behind her said:

"Before you go, *monsieur*, give me some explanation of this imbecility!"

Fiorsen shook his fist, and went out muttering. They heard the front door slam. Gyp turned abruptly to the window, and stood looking into the back yard. Even there summer had crept in. The leaves of the sumach-tree were glistening; in the patch of sunlight, a black cat with a blue ribbon round its neck was basking. The voice of one hawking strawberries drifted from a side street. She *knew* that Monsieur Harmost was standing with a hand pressed to his mouth, and she felt a passion of compunction and anger. Kind and harmless old man—to be so insulted! It was the culmination of all her husband's outrages! She would never forgive him this! He had insulted her as well, beyond what could be endured! She turned, and put both her hands into Monsieur Harmost's.

"I'm so awfully sorry. Good-bye, dear, dear Monsieur Harmost; I shall come on Friday!" And, before he could stop her, she was gone.

Just as she reached the pavement on the other side, she felt her dress plucked and saw Fiorsen behind her. She shook herself free and walked swiftly on. Was he going to make a scene in the street? Again he caught her arm. She faced round on him, and said, in an icy voice:

"Please don't make scenes in the street, and don't follow me like this. If you want to talk to me, you can—at home."

Then, very calmly, she walked on. But he still followed her, some paces off. To the first cab that passed she made a sign.

"Bury Street—quick!" She saw Fiorsen rush forward, too late to stop her. He stood still, deadly pale

under his broad-brimmed hat. She was far too angry and upset to care.

She had determined to go to her father. She would not go back to Fiorsen; but how to get Betty and her baby? Winton was almost sure to be at his club. And leaning out, she said: "No; Hyde Park Corner, please."

The hall porter, who knew her, after calling to a page-boy: "Major Winton—sharp, now!" came out of his box to offer her a seat and *The Times*.

Gyp sat with the journal on her knee, vaguely conscious of a thin old gentleman anxiously weighing himself in a corner, of a white-calved footman crossing with a tea-tray; a number of hats on pegs; the green-baize board with its white rows of tapelike paper, and three members standing before it. One, tall, stout, good-humoured, in *pince-nez* and a white waistcoat, removed his straw hat and took up a position whence, without staring, he could gaze at one whom he seemed to find to his liking. Then her father's unhurried figure passed that little group; and eager to get out of this sanctum of masculinity, she met him at the top of the low steps.

"I want to talk to you, Dad."

He gave her a quick look, selected his hat, and followed to the door. In the cab, he put his hand on hers.

"Now, my dear?"

"I want to come back to you. I can't go on there. It's—it's—I've come to an end."

His hand pressed hers tightly, as if trying to save her the need for saying more. Gyp went on:

"But I must get baby; I'm terrified he'll try to keep her, to get me back."

"Is he at home?"

"I don't know. I haven't told him that I'm going to leave him."

Winton looked at his watch.

"Does the baby ever go out as late as this?"

"Yes; after tea. It's cooler."

"I'll take this cab on, then. You stay and get the

room ready for her. Don't worry, and don't go out till I return."

How wonderful of him not to have asked a single question!

The cab stopped at the Bury Street door. He said quietly:

"Do you want the dogs?"

"Yes—oh, yes! He doesn't care for them."

"All right. There'll be time to get you in some things for the night after I come back. I shan't run any risks to-day. Make Mrs. Markey give you tea."

Gyp watched the cab gather way again, saw him wave his hand; and, with a deep sigh, half anxiety, half relief, she rang the bell.

XVII

In St. James's Street, Winton gave the order: "Quick as you can!" A little red had come into his brown cheeks; his eyes under their half-drawn lids were keener; his lips tightly closed; he looked as he did when a fox was breaking cover. He was going to take no risks—make no frontal attack. Time for that later, if need were. He had better nerves than most men, and that steely determination and resource which makes many Englishmen of his class formidable in small operations. At Fiorsen's he kept his cab, rang, and asked for Gyp, with a kind of pleasure in his ruse.

"She's not in yet, sir. Mr. Fiorsen's in."

"Ah! And baby?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll come in and see her. In the garden?"

"Yes, sir."

"Dogs there, too?"

"Yes, sir. And will you have tea, please, sir?"

"No, thanks." How to effect this withdrawal without causing gossip, and suspicion of collusion with Gyp? And he added: "Unless Mrs. Fiorsen comes in."

Passing out into the garden, he became aware that Fiorsen was at the dining-room window watching him. The baby was under the trees at the far end, and the dogs came rushing with a fury which lasted till they came within scent of him. Winton went up to the perambulator, and, saluting Betty, looked down at his grandchild. She lay under an awning of muslin, for fear of flies, and was awake. Her solemn, large, brown eyes, already like Gyp's, regarded him with gravity. Clucking to her, he moved so as to face the house and have Betty with her back to it.

"I'm here with a message from your mistress, Betty. Keep your head; don't look round, but listen to me. She's at Bury Street and going to stay there; she wants you and baby and the dogs." The stout woman's eyes and mouth

opened. Winton put his hand on the perambulator. "Steady! Go out as usual with this thing. It's about your time; and wait for me at the turning to Regent's Park. I'll come on in my cab and pick you all up. Don't get flurried; don't take anything; do exactly as you usually would. Understand?"

It is not in the nature of stout women with babies in their charge to receive such an order without question. Her colour, and the heaving of that billowy bosom, made him add quickly:

"Now, Betty, pull yourself together; Gyp wants you. I'll tell you all about it in the cab."

"Yes, sir. Poor little thing! What about its night-things? And Miss Gyp's?"

Conscious of that figure still at the window, Winton made some passes at the baby.

"Never mind them. As soon as you see me at the drawing-room window, get ready and go. Eyes front, Betty; don't look round; I'll cover your retreat! Don't fail Gyp, now. Pull yourself together."

With a vast sigh, Betty murmured: "Very well, sir; oh, dear!" and adjusted the strings of her bonnet. Winton saluted, and began his march again towards the house. He kept his eyes to this side and that, as if examining the flowers, but noted that Fiorsen had receded from the window, and, entering by the drawing-room window, he went quickly into the hall. He listened a second before opening the dining-room door. Fiorsen was pacing up and down. He stared haggardly at Winton, who said:

"How are you? Gyp not in?"

"No."

That "No" touched Winton with a vague compunction. To be left by Gyp! But his heart hardened again. The fellow was such a rotter.

"Baby looks well," he said.

Fiorsen began to pace up and down again.

"Where is Gyp? I want her."

Winton took out his watch.

"It's not late." And suddenly he felt aversion for the part he was playing. To get the baby; to make Gyp safe —yes! But not this pretence that he knew nothing about it. He turned on his heel and walked out. He could not stay prevaricating like this. Had that woman got clear? He went back into the drawing-room. They were just passing the side of the house. In five minutes they would be down at the turning. He stood waiting. If only that fellow did not come in! Through the partition wall he could hear him still tramping up and down the dining-room. What a long time a minute was! Only three had gone when he heard the dining-room door opened, and Fiorsen crossing the hall to the front door. What was he after, standing there as if listening? And suddenly Winton heard him sigh—just such a sound as many times, in the long-past days, had escaped himself, waiting, listening for footsteps, in parched and sickening anxiety. Did this fellow then really love? And in revolt at spying on him, he advanced and said:

"Well, I won't wait any longer. Good-bye!" The words: "Give my love to Gyp," perished on their way up to his lips.

"Good-bye!" Fiorsen echoed. Winton went out under the trellis, conscious of that forlorn figure still standing at the half-opened door. Betty was nowhere in sight; she must have reached the turning. His mission had succeeded, but he felt no elation. Round the corner, he picked up his convoy, and, with the perambulator hoisted on to the taxi, journeyed on at speed. He had meant to explain in the cab, but all he said was:

"You'll all go down to Mildenham to-morrow."

And Betty, who had feared him ever since their encounter so many years ago, eyed his profile, without daring to ask questions. Winton stopped at a post-office on the way, and sent this telegram:

"Gyp and the baby are with me—letter follows.—WINTON."

It salved his conscience; besides, it was necessary, lest Fiorsen should go to the police. The rest must wait till he had talked with Gyp.

It was late before they could begin their talk.

Close to the open windows where Markey had placed two hydrangea plants—bought on his own responsibility, in token of silent satisfaction—Gyp began. She kept nothing back, recounting the whole miserable fiasco of her marriage. When she came to Daphne Wing and her discovery in the music-room, she could see the glowing end of her father's cigar move convulsively. In her own house—her own house! And—after that, she had gone on with him! He did not interrupt, but his stillness almost frightened her.

Coming to the incidents of the day, she hesitated. Must she tell him, too, of Rosek? Candour prevailed, and Winton made no sign. When she had finished, he got up and slowly extinguished the end of his cigar against the window-sill; then looking at her lying back in her chair as if exhausted, he said: "By God!" and turned to the window.

At that hour before the theatres rose, a lull brooded in the London streets, broken by the clack of a half-drunken woman bickering at her man as they lurched along home, and the strains of a street musician's fiddle, trying to make up for a blank day. The sound vaguely irritated Winton, reminding him of those two damnable foreigners by whom she had been so treated. To have them at the point of a sword or pistol—to teach them a lesson! He heard her say:

"Dad, I should like to pay his debts. Then things would be as they were when I married him."

He emitted an exasperated sound. He did not believe in heaping coals of fire.

"I want to make sure, too, that the girl is all right till she's over her trouble. Perhaps I could use some of that—that other money, if mine is all tied up?"

Anger, not disapproval of her impulse, made him

hesitate; money and revenge would never be associated in his mind.

"I want to feel as if I'd never let him marry me. Perhaps his debts are all part of that—who knows?"

How like—her figure sunk back in the old chair, and the face lifted in shadow! And exultation came to Winton. He had got her back!

XVIII

FIORSEN'S bedroom was—as the maid would remark—"a proper pigsty"—until he was out of it and it could be renovated each day. He had a talent for disorder, so that the room looked as if three men instead of one had gone to bed in it. Clothes and shoes, brushes, water, tumblers, newspapers, French novels, and cigarette-ends—none were ever where they should have been; and the stale fumes from cigarettes incommoded anyone whose duty it was to take him tea and shaving-water. When, on the morning of that day, the maid had brought Rosek up to him, he had been lying a long time on his back, dreamily watching the smoke from his cigarette and four flies waltzing in the sunlight that filtered through the green sun-blinds. This hour, before he rose, was his creative moment, when he could best see the form of music and feel inspiration for its rendering. Of late, he had been stale and dull; but this morning he felt again the stir of fancy, that vibrating, half-dreamy state when emotion finds shape and the mind pierces through to new expression. Hearing the maid's knock, and her murmured: "Count Rosek to see you, sir," he thought: 'What the devil does he want?' A larger nature, drifting without control, in contact with a smaller which knows its own mind exactly, will instinctively be irritable.

It would be money he had come about, or—that girl! That girl—he wished she were dead! Soft, clinging creature! A baby! God! What a fool he had been—ah, what a fool! First Gyp—then her! He had tried to shake the girl off. As well try to shake off a burr! How she clung! He had been patient—patient and kind, but how go on when one was tired! He wanted only Gyp, only his own wife? And now, when, for an hour or two, he had shaken off worry, been feeling happy—this fellow must come, and stand there with his face of a sphinx!

"Well, Paul! sit down. What troubles have you brought?"

Rosek lit a cigarette. He struck even Fiorsen by his unsmiling pallor.

"You had better look out for Mr. Wagge, Gustav; he came to me yesterday. He has no music in his soul."

Fiorsen sat up.

"Satan take Mr. Wagge! What can he do?"

"I am not a lawyer, but I imagine he can be unpleasant—the girl is young."

Fiorsen glared at him, and said:

"Why did you throw me that cursed girl?"

"I did not, my friend."

"You did. What was your game? You never do anything without a game. You know you did. Come; what was your game?"

"You like pleasure, I believe."

Fiorsen said violently:

"Look here: I have done with your friendship—I have never really known you. It is finished. Leave me in peace."

Rosek smiled.

"My dear, friendships are not finished like that. You owe me a thousand pounds."

"Well, I will pay it. My wife will lend it to me."

"Oh! Is she so fond of you? I thought she only loved her music-lessons."

Crouching forward with his knees drawn up, Fiorsen hissed out:

"Get out of this! I will pay you your thousand pounds."

Rosek, still smiling, answered:

"Don't be a fool, Gustav! With a violin to your shoulder, you are a man. Without—you are a child. Lie quiet, my friend, and think of Mr. Wagge. But you had better come and talk it over with me. Good-bye for the moment. Calm yourself." And, flipping the ash off his cigarette on to the tray by Fiorsen's elbow, he went.

Fiorsen put his hand to his head. Cursed be everyone

of them—the father and the girl, Rosek and all the other sharks! He went out on to the landing. The house was quite still below. Rosek had gone—good riddance! He called to Gyp. No answer. He went into her room, superlatively dainty, with a scent of cyclamen! He looked out into the garden. There was the baby at the end, and that fat woman. No Gyp! Never in when she was wanted. Wagge! He shivered; and, going back into his bedroom, took a brandy-bottle from a locked cupboard and drank some. It steadied him; he locked up the cupboard again, and dressed.

Going out to the music-room, he stopped under the trees to make passes with his fingers at the baby. Sometimes he felt that it was an adorable little creature, with its big, dark eyes so like Gyp's. Sometimes it excited his disgust—a discoloured brat. This morning, while looking at it, he thought suddenly of the other that was coming—and grimaced. Catching Betty's stare of horrified amazement at the face he was making at her darling, he burst into a laugh and turned away into the music-room.

While he was keying his violin, Gyp's conduct in never having come there for so long, struck him as bitterly unjust. As if that wretched girl made any real difference! Gyp had never loved him, never given him what he wanted, never quenched his thirst of her! That was the heart of it. No other woman had ever been like that—kept his thirst unquenched. He had always tired of them before they tired of him. She gave him nothing! Had she no heart or did she give it elsewhere? What had Paul said about her music-lessons? And suddenly it struck him that he knew nothing, absolutely nothing, of where she went or what she did. Music-lessons? Every day, nearly, she went out, was away for hours. Where? To the arms of another man? He put down his violin in actual sickness. Why not? That whipping of the sexual instinct which makes the ache of jealousy so terrible, was at its full in such a nature as Fiorsen's. He shuddered. But the remembrance of her fastidious pride, her candour,

above all her passivity, cut in across his fear. No, not Gyp!

He went to a little table whereon stood a tantalus, and pouring out some brandy, drank. It steadied him. And he began to practise. He took a passage from Brahms's violin concerto and played it over and over. He found he was repeating the same flaws each time; he was not attending. The fingering of that thing was ghastly! Music-lessons! Why did she take them? Waste of time and money—she would never be anything but an amateur! Had she gone there to-day? It was past lunch-time. Perhaps she had come in.

He went back to the house. No sign of her! The maid came to ask if he would lunch. No! Was the mistress to be in? She had not said. He went into the dining-room, ate a biscuit, and drank a brandy and soda. It steadied him. He came back to the drawing-room and sat down at Gyp's bureau. How tidy! On the little calendar, a pencil-cross was set against to-day—Wednesday, another against Friday. What for? Music-lessons! He reached to a pigeon-hole, and took out her address book. "H—Harmost, 305A, Marylebone Road," and against it the words in pencil, "3 p.m."

Three o'clock. That was her hour! His eyes rested on a little old coloured print of a Bacchante, with flowing green scarf, shaking a tambourine at a naked Cupid, who with a baby bow and arrow in his hands, was gazing up at her. He turned it over: on the back was written in a pointed, scriggly hand, "To my little friend.—E. H." Fiorsen went to the piano. He opened it and began to play, staring vacantly before him, scarcely knowing what he played. A great artist? Often, nowadays, he did not care if he never touched a violin again. Tired of standing up before a sea of dull faces, seeing the blockheads knock their silly hands one against the other! Sick of the sameness of it all!

He got up, went into the dining-room, and drank some brandy. Gyp could not bear his drinking. Well, she

shouldn't be out so much—taking music-lessons. Music-lessons! Nearly three o'clock. He would go and see what she really did—go and offer her his escort home! An attention. It might please her. Better than waiting here till she chose to come in with her face closed up. He drank a little more brandy, took his hat and went. He walked in the hot sun, and reached the house feeling dizzy. A maid-servant opened the door.

"I am Mr. Fiorsen. Mrs. Fiorsen here?"

"Yes, sir; will you wait?"

Why did she look at him like that? Ugly girl! How hateful ugly people were! When she was gone, he re-opened the door of the waiting-room, and listened.

Chopin! The polonaise in A flat. Good! Could that be Gyp? Very good! He moved out, down the passage, drawn on by her playing, and softly turned the handle. The music stopped. He went in.

When Winton had left him, an hour and a half later that afternoon, Fiorsen continued to stand at the front door. The brandy-nurtured burst of jealousy which had made him insult his wife and old Monsieur Harmost, had died suddenly when Gyp turned on him in the street and spoke in that icy voice: since then he had felt fear, increasing every minute. Would she forgive? To one who always acted on the impulse of the moment, so that he rarely knew afterward exactly what he had done, or whom hurt, Gyp's self-control had ever been mysterious and a little frightening. Where had she gone? Why did she not come in? His anxiety, like a ball rolling down-hill, gathered momentum. Suppose she did not come back! But she must—there was the baby—their baby!

For the first time, the thought of it gave him unalloyed satisfaction. He left the door, and, after drinking a glass to steady him, flung himself down on the sofa in the drawing-room. And while he lay there, the brandy warm within him, he thought: 'I will turn over a new leaf; give up drink, give up everything, send the baby into the

country, take Gyp to Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Rome—anywhere out of England, away from that father of hers and all these stiff, dull folk! She loves travelling!' Yes, they would be happy! Delicious nights—delicious days—air that did not weigh you down and make you feel that you must drink—real inspiration—real music! The wood-smoke scent of Paris streets, the glistening of the Thiergarten, a serenading song in a Florence back street, fireflies in Italian summer dusk—he had intoxicating memories of them all! The warmth of the brandy died away, he felt chill and shuddery. He shut his eyes, thinking to sleep till she came in. But very soon he opened them, because—a thing usual with him of late—he saw such ugly things—faces, vivid, changing as he looked, growing ugly and uglier, becoming all holes—holes—holes—— Corruption—matted, twisted, human tree-root faces! Horrible! He opened his eyes, for when he did that they went. It was very silent. No sound from above. No sound of the dogs. He would go up and see the baby.

While he was crossing the hall, there came a ring. A telegram! He tore the envelope.

"Gyp and the baby are with me—letter follows.—WINTON."

With a laugh he shut the door in the boy's face, and ran upstairs; why——! There was nobody there now! Did it mean that she had really left him? He stopped by Gyp's bed, and flinging himself forward, lay across it, burying his face. And he sobbed, unmanned by drink. Had he lost her? Never to see her eyes closing and press his lips against them! Never to soak his senses in her loveliness! He leaped up. Lost her? Absurd! That calm, prim, devilish Englishman, her father—he had worked it all—stealing the baby!

He went downstairs and drank some brandy. It steadied him a little. What should he do? "Letter follows." Go to Bury Street? No. Drink! Enjoy himself!

Catching up his hat, he went out, walking furiously,

till his head began to whirl; then, taking a cab, was driven to a Soho restaurant. He had eaten nothing but a biscuit since breakfast, always a small matter, and he ordered soup and a flask of their best Chianti—solids he could not face. More than two hours he sat, white and silent, perspiration on his forehead, now and then grinning and flourishing his fingers, to the amusement and sometimes the alarm of those sitting near. But for being known there, he would have been regarded with suspicion. About half-past nine, having finished his wine, he got up, put a piece of gold on the table, and went out without waiting for his change.

The lamps were lighted, but daylight not quite gone. He walked unsteadily, toward Piccadilly. A girl of the town passed and looked up at him. Staring hard, he hooked his arm in hers; it steadied him, and they walked on together. Suddenly the girl stopped and tried to disengage her arm; a frightened look had come into her dark-eyed powdered face. Fiorsen held it firm, and laughed. "Come on!" he said. "You are like my wife. Will you have a drink?"

The girl shook her head, and, with a sudden movement, slipped her arm out and dived away like a swallow through the pavement traffic. Fiorsen stood still and laughed. The second time to-day *She* had slipped from his grasp. Passers looked at him, amazed. Ugly devils! With a grimace, he turned out of Piccadilly, past St. James's Church, and made for Bury Street. They wouldn't let him in, of course! But he would look at the windows; they had flower-boxes! And, suddenly, he groaned aloud—thinking of Gyp among the flowers at home. He came in at the bottom of the street, where a fiddler in the gutter was scraping on an old violin. Fiorsen stopped to listen. Poor devil! Pagliacci! He put his hand on the man's shoulder.

"Friend," he said, "lend me your fiddle. I am a great violinist. I'll make some money for you."

"*Vraiment, monsieur!*"

"Ah! *Vraiment! Voyons! Donnez—un instant—vous verrez.*"

The fiddler, doubting but hypnotised, handed him the fiddle; his dark face changed when he saw the stranger fling it up to his shoulder and the ways of his fingers with bow and strings. Fiorsen had begun to walk up the street, searching for the flower-boxes. He saw them, stopped, and began playing "*Che faro?*" He played it wonderfully on that poor fiddle; and the fiddler, who had followed at his elbow, stood watching, uneasy, envious, a little entranced. This tall, pale *monsieur* with the strange face and the drunken eyes and hollow chest, played like an angel! Ah, but it was not so easy as all that to make money in the streets of this sacred town! You might play like forty angels and not a copper! He had begun another tune now—like little pluckings at your heart—*très joli—tout à fait écœurant!* But there it was—a *monsieur* as usual closing the window, drawing the curtains! Always same thing! The violin and the bow were thrust back into his hands with some silver; and the tall strange *monsieur* was off as if devils were after him—not badly drunk, that one! And with an uneasy feeling that he had been involved in something that he did not understand, the lame, dark fiddler limped his way round the nearest corner, and for two streets at least did not stop. Then, counting the silver Fiorsen had put into his hand and carefully examining his fiddle, he uttered the word, "*Bigre!*" and started for home.

XIX

Gyp hardly slept at all. Three times she rose, stole to the door, and looked in at her sleeping baby. The afternoon had shaken her nerves. It was so hot, and the sound of the violin was still in her ears. By that little air of Poise, she had known for certain it was Fiorsen; and her father's abrupt drawing of the curtains had clinched that certainty. If she had seen him, she would not have been half so disturbed as by that echo of an old emotion. It had reforged the link which yesterday she had thought broken for good. The sobbing of that old fiddle had been his way of saying, "Forgive me; forgive!" To leave him would have been so much easier if she had really hated him. Difficult to live with, he was quite as difficult to hate. He was so flexible—only the rigid can be hated. She hated the things he did, and him when he was doing them; but afterward again could hate him no more than she could love him, and that was—not at all. Resolution and a sense of the practical came back with daylight. It was better to recognise that things were hopeless and harden one's heart.

Winton, whose night had been as sleepless—to play like a beggar in the street, under his windows, had seemed to him the limit!—announced at breakfast that he must see his lawyer, and find out what could be done to secure Gyp against persecution. Some deed was probably necessary; he was vague on all such matters. In the meantime, neither Gyp nor the baby must go out. Gyp spent the morning writing to Monsieur Harmost, trying to express her chagrin, without saying that she had left Fiorsen.

Her father came back from Westminster quiet and angry. He had with difficulty been made to understand that the baby was Fiorsen's property, so that, if the fellow claimed it, in law they would be unable to resist. The point opened the old wound, forced him to remember that his own daughter had once belonged to another—father. He had told the lawyer that he would see the fellow

damned first, and had directed him to draw a deed of separation, providing for the payment of Fiorsen's existing debts on condition that he left Gyp and the baby in peace. After telling Gyp this, he went into the extempore nursery. Until then, the little creature had only been of interest as part of Gyp; now it had for him an existence of its own—this tiny dark-eyed creature, watching him so gravely, clutching his finger. Suddenly the baby smiled—not a beautiful smile, but one that made on Winton an indelible impression.

Wishing first to settle this matter of the deed, he put off going down to Mildenham; but "not trusting those two scoundrels a yard," he insisted that the baby should not go out without two attendants, and that Gyp should not go out alone. He carried precaution to the point of accompanying her to Monsieur Harmost's on the Friday afternoon, and expressed a wish to go in and shake hands with the old fellow. It was a queer meeting. Those two had as great difficulty in finding anything to say as though they had been denizens of different planets. When, after a minute or so of friendly embarrassment, he retired to wait for her, Gyp sat down to her lesson.

Monsieur Harmost said quietly:

"Your letter was very kind, my little friend—and your father is very kind. But, after all, it was a compliment your husband paid me." And his smile seemed to sum up many resignations. "So you stay again with your father! When will you find your fate, I wonder?"

"Never!"

"Ah, you think! No, that is impossible! Well, we must not waste your father's time. To work."

Winton's comment in the cab was:

"Quite a nice old chap!"

At Bury Street, they found Gyp's agitated parlour-maid. Going to do the music-room that morning, she had "found the master sitting on the sofa, holding his head, and groaning awful. He's not been at home, ma'am, since you—you went on your visit, so I didn't know what to do. I

ran for cook and we got him up to bed, and not knowing where you'd be, ma'am, I telephoned to Count Rosek, and he came—I hope I didn't do wrong—and he sent me down to see you. The doctor says his brain's on the touch and go, and he keeps askin' for you, ma'am. So I didn't know what to do."

Gyp, pale to the lips, said:

"Wait here a minute, Ellen," and went into the dining-room. Winton followed.

"Oh, Dad, what am I to do? His brain! It would be too awful to feel I'd brought that about. I must go and see. If it's really that, I couldn't bear it. I'm afraid I must go, Dad."

Winton nodded.

"I'll come too," he said. "The girl can go back in the cab and say we're on the way."

Taking a parting look at her baby, Gyp thought bitterly: '*This* is my fate, and no getting out of it!' On the journey, she and Winton were silent—but she held his hand tight. While the cook was taking up to Rosek the news of their arrival, Gyp stood looking out at her garden. Two days and six hours only since she had stood there above her pansies; since, at this very spot, Rosek had kissed her throat! And slipping her hand through Winton's arm, she said:

"Dad, please don't make anything of that kiss. What does it matter?"

A moment later Rosek entered. Before she could speak, Winton said:

"Now that my daughter is here, there will be no further need for your kind services. Good-day!"

Gyp gave the tiniest start forward. She had seen the curt words go through Rosek's armour as a sword through brown paper. With a sickly smile, he bowed, and went out. Winton followed—precisely as if he did not trust him with the hats in the hall. When the outer door was shut, he said:

"I don't think he'll trouble you again."

Gyp's gratitude was qualified by queer compassion. His offence had only been that of wanting her.

Fiorsen had been taken to her room, which was larger and cooler than his own. He opened his eyes presently:

"Gyp! Is it you? The awful things I see—don't go away again! Oh, Gyp!" He raised himself and rested his forehead against her. And Gyp felt—as on the first night he came home drunk—a merging of other emotions in the desire to protect.

"It's all right," she murmured. "I'm going to stay. Keep quite quiet, and you'll soon be well."

In a quarter of an hour he was asleep. The expression of terror which had been coming and going on his face until he fell asleep went to her heart. Anything to do with the brain was so horrible! She must stay—his recovery depended on her. She was still sitting there, motionless, when the doctor came and beckoned her out. He looked a kindly man, with two waistcoats; and while he talked, he winked at Gyp, and, with each wink, she felt that he ripped the veil off one more domestic secret. Sleep was the ticket! Had something on his mind—yes! And —er—a little given to—brandy? All that must stop! Stomach as well as nerves affected. Seeing things—nasty things—sure sign. Not a very careful life before marriage. And married—how long? His kindly eyes swept Gyp from top to toe. Year and a half! Quite so! Hard worker at his violin? No doubt! Musicians always a little inclined to be immoderate—too much sense of beauty —burn the candle at both ends! She must see to that. She had been away, had she not—staying with her father? Yes. No one like a wife for nursing. Treatment? Well! One would shove in a dash of what he would prescribe, night and morning. Perfect quiet. No stimulant. A little cup of strong coffee without milk, if he seemed low. In bed at present. No worry; no excitement. Young man still. Plenty of vitality. No undue anxiety. Tomorrow they would see whether a night nurse would be necessary. No violin for a month, no alcohol—in every

way the strictest moderation! And with a last wink, leaning heavily on the word "moderation," he took out a stylographic pen, scratched on a leaf of his notebook, shook Gyp's hand, smiled, buttoned his upper waistcoat, and was gone.

Gyp went back to her seat by the bed. Irony! She whose only desire was to be free, was mainly responsible for his breakdown! But for her, there would be nothing on his mind—he would not be married! His drinking, debts, even the girl—had she caused them, too? And when she tried to free him and herself—this was the result! Was there something fatal in her that destroyed the men she had to do with? She had made her father unhappy, Monsieur Harmost—Rosek, and her husband! Even before she married, how many had tried for her love, and gone away unhappy! And, going up to a mirror, she looked at herself long and sadly.

XX

THREE days after her abortive attempt to break away, Gyp wrote to Daphne Wing, telling her of Fiorsen's illness, and mentioning a cottage near Mildenham, where—if she liked to go—she would be comfortable and safe from curiosity, and finally begging to be allowed to make good the losses from broken dance contracts.

Next morning she found Mr. Wagge with a tall, crape-banded hat in his black-gloved hands, standing in the very centre of her drawing-room. He was staring into the garden, as if vouchsafed a vision of that warm night when the moonlight shed ghostly glamour on the sunflowers, and his daughter had glanced out there. She had a perfect view of his thick red neck in a turndown collar, crossed by a black bow over a shiny white shirt. And, holding out her hand, she said:

"How do you do, Mr. Wagge? It was kind of you to come."

Mr. Wagge turned. His pug face wore a downcast expression.

"I hope I see you well, ma'am. Pretty place you 'ave 'ere. I'm fond of flowers myself. They've always been my 'obby."

"They're a great comfort in London."

"Ye-es; I should think you might grow the dahlia 'ere." Having obeyed the obscure instincts of *savoir faire*, satisfied some obscure desire to flatter, he went on: "My girl showed me your letter. I didn't like to write; in such a delicate matter I'd rather be vivey vocey. Very kind, in your position, I'm sure. I always try to do the Christian thing myself. Flesh passes; you never know when you may have to take your turn. I said to my girl I'd come and see you."

"I'm very glad. I hoped perhaps you would."

Mr. Wagge cleared his throat, and went on.

"I don't want to say anything harsh about a certain party in your presence, especially as I read he's indisposed,

but really I hardly know how to bear the situation. I can't bring myself to think of money in relation to that matter; all the same, it's a serious loss to my daughter, very serious loss. I've got my family pride to think of. My daughter's name, well—it's my own; and, though I say it, I'm respected—a regular attendant—I think I told you. Sometimes, I assure you, I feel I can't control myself, and it's only that—and you, if I may say so, that keeps me in check."

His black-gloved hands were clenching and unclenching, and he shifted his broad, shining boots. Gyp gazed at them, not daring to look up at his eyes thus turning from Christianity to shekels, from his honour to the world, from his anger to herself.

"Please let me do what I ask, Mr. Wagge. I should be so unhappy if I mightn't do that little something."

Mr. Wagge blew his nose.

"It's a delicate matter," he said. "I don't know where my duty lays. I don't reelly."

Gyp looked up.

"The great thing is to save Daisy suffering, isn't it?"

Mr. Wagge's face wore for a moment an expression as if from the thought: 'Sufferin'! You must leave that to her father!' Then it wavered; the furtive warmth of the attracted male came for a moment into his little eyes; he averted them, and coughed. Gyp said softly:

"To please me."

Mr. Wagge's readjusted glance stopped in confusion at her waist. He answered, in a voice that he strove to soften:

"If you put it that way, I don't reelly know 'ow to refuse; but quite between you and me—I can't withdraw my attitude."

"Of course. Thank you so much; you'll let me know later. I mustn't take up your time now." And she held out her hand.

Mr. Wagge took it in a lingering manner.

"Well, I *have* an appointment," he said; "a gentle-

man on Campden Hill. He starts at twelve. I'm never late. *Good*-morning."

When she had watched him, square and black, pass through the outer gate, busily rebuttoning those shiny gloves, she went upstairs and washed her face and hands.

For several days Fiorsen wavered; but his collapse had come just in time, and with every hour the danger lessened. At the end of a fortnight of a perfectly white life, there remained nothing to do, in the words of the doctor, but "to shove in sea air, and avoid recurrence of the predisposing causes." Gyp had locked them all up, including herself; she could control him so long as he was tamed by his own weakness. But she passed some very bitter hours before she sent for her baby, Betty, and the dogs, and definitely took up life in her own house again. His debts had been paid, including the thousand pounds to Rosek, and the losses of Daphne Wing. The girl had gone down to that cottage where no one had ever heard of her, to pass her time in lonely terror, with the aid of a black dress and a gold band on her third finger.

August and the first half of September were spent near Bude. Fiorsen's passion for the sea kept him singularly moderate and free from restiveness. He had been thoroughly frightened, and such terror is not easily forgotten. They stayed in a farmhouse, where he was at his best with the simple folk, and his best could be charming. He was always trying to get his "mermaid" away from the baby, away to himself, along the grassy cliffs and among the rocks and yellow sands. His delight was to find every day some new nook where they could bathe, and dry themselves by sitting in the sun. And very like a mermaid she was, on a seaweedy rock, with her feet close together in a little pool, her fingers combing her drowned hair. If she had loved him! But though, close to nature like this, he was much more easy to bear, her heart never opened to him, never fluttered at his voice, or beat more quickly under his kisses. Her eyes when they looked at

her baby, and when they looked at him, were so different that not even an egoist could help seeing; he began to hate that tiny rival, and she began to notice that he did.

When the weather broke, he grew restless, craving his violin, and they went back to town, in robust health. Gyp had never been free of the feeling that it was just a lull, and the moment they were back, the feeling gathered density, as rain gathers in the sky after a fine spell. She had often thought of Daphne Wing, and had written, getting in return this answer:

"DEAR MRS. FIORSEN,

"Oh, it is kind of you to write, because I know what you must be feeling about me; and it was so kind of you to let me come here. I try not to think about things, but of course I can't help it; and I don't seem to care what happens now. Mother is coming down here later on. Sometimes I lie awake all night, listening to the wind. Don't you think the wind is the most melancholy thing in the world? I wonder if I shall die? I hope I shall. Oh, I do, really. Good-bye, dear Mrs. Fiorsen. I shall never forgive myself about you.

"Your grateful,

"DAPHNE WING."

The girl had never once been mentioned between her and Fiorsen; she did not know whether he ever gave the little dancer a thought, or even knew what had become of her. But now that the time was getting near, Gyp felt more every day as if she must go down and see her. She wrote to her father, who, after a dose of Harrogate with Aunt Rosamund, was back at Mildenham. Winton answered that the nurse was there, and that there seemed to be a woman, presumably the mother, staying with her, but that he had not of course made direct inquiry. Could not Gyp come down? He was alone, and cubbing had begun. It was like him to veil his longings under such dry statements. But the thought of giving him pleasure, and of a

gallop with hounds fortified her feeling that she ought to go. Baby was well, Fiorsen not drinking, she might surely snatch this little holiday and satisfy her conscience about the girl. Since Cornwall, she had played for him in the music-room as of old, and she chose the finish of a morning practice to say:

"I want to go to Mildenham this afternoon for a week. Father's lonely."

She saw his neck grow red.

"To him? No. He will steal you as he stole the baby. Let him have the baby if he likes. Not you. No."

At this unexpected outburst, revolt blazed up in her. She never asked him anything; he should not refuse this. He came up behind and put his arms round her.

"My Gyp, I want you here—I am lonely, too. Don't go away."

She tried to force his arms apart, but could not, and her anger grew. She said coldly:

"There's another reason."

"No good reason—to take you from me."

"The girl who is going to have your child is staying near Mildenham; I want to see how she is."

He let go of her then, and recoiling against the divan, sat down. And Gyp thought: 'I'm sorry—but it serves him right.'

"She may die. I must go; but you needn't be afraid that I shan't come back. I shall be back to-day week; I promise."

He looked at her fixedly.

"Yes. You don't break your promises; you will not break it." But, suddenly, he said again: "Gyp, don't go!"

"I must."

He caught her in his arms.

"Say you love me, then!"

But she could not. It was one thing to put up with embraces, quite another to pretend that. When at last he

was gone, she sat smoothing her hair, staring before her with hard eyes, thinking: 'Here—where I saw him with that girl!'

Late that afternoon, she reached Mildenham. Winton met her at the station. On the drive up, they passed the cottage where Daphne Wing was staying. It stood in front of a small coppice, a creepered, plain-fronted, little brick house, with a garden still full of sunflowers, tenanted by the old jockey, Pettance, his widowed daughter, and her three small children. "That talkative old scoundrel," as Winton called him, was still employed in the Mildenham stables, and his daughter was laundress to the establishment. Gyp had secured for Daphne Wing the nurse who had watched over her own event; the same old doctor, too, was to be the presiding deity. There were no signs of life about the cottage, and she would not stop, too eager to be at home again, see the old rooms, smell the old savour of the house, get to her old mare, and feel its nose nuzzling her for sugar. It was so good to be back once more, feeling strong and well and able to ride. The smile of Markey at the front door was a joy to her, even the darkness of the hall, where a gleam of last sunlight fell across the skin of Winton's first tiger, on which she had so often sunk down dead tired after hunting.

In her mare's box, old Pettance was putting a last touch to cleanliness. His shaven, skin-tight old face smiled deeply.

"Good-evenin', miss; beautiful evenin', ma'am!" And his little burning brown eyes, just touched by age, regarded her lovingly.

"Well, Pettance, how are you? And how's Annie, and how are the children? And how's this old darling?"

"Wonderful, miss; artful as a kitten. Carry you like a bird to-morrow, if you're goin' out."

"How are her legs?"

And Gyp passed her hand down those iron legs.

"They 'aven't filled not once since she come in—she

was out all July and August; but I've kept 'er well at it since, in 'opes you might be comin'."

"They feel splendid." Still bending, Gyp asked: "And how is your lodger—the young lady I sent you?"

"Well, ma'am, she's very young, and these very young ladies they get a bit excited, you know, at such times; I should say she've never been——" With obvious difficulty he checked the words, "to an 'orse before!" "Well, you must expect it. And her mother, she's a dreadful funny one. She does needle me! Oh, she puts my back up properly! No class, of course—that's where it is. But this 'ere nurse—well, you know, miss, she won't 'ave no nonsense; so there we are. And, of course, she's bound to 'ave 'ighsteria, a bit—losin' her 'usband as young as that."

Gyp could feel his wicked old smile even before she raised herself. What did it matter if he did guess? He would keep a stable secret.

"Oh, we've 'ad some pretty flirts-up and cryin', dear me! I sleeps in the next room—oh, yes, at night-time—when you're a widder at that age, you can't expect nothin' else. I remember when I was ridin' in Ireland for Captain O'Neill, there was a young woman——"

Gyp thought: 'I mustn't let him get off—or I shall be late for dinner,' and she said:

"Oh, Pettance, who bought the young brown horse?"

"Mr. Bryn Summer'ay, ma'am, over at Widrington, for an 'unter, and 'ack in town, miss."

"Summerhay? Ah!" Gyp recalled the young man with the clear eyes and teasing smile, on the chestnut mare, the bold young man who reminded her of somebody.

"That'll be a good home for him, I should think."

"Oh, yes, miss; good 'ome—nice gentleman, too. He come over here to see it, and asked after you. I told 'im you was a married lady now, miss. 'Ah,' he said; 'she rode beautiful!' And he remembered the 'orse well. The major, he wasn't 'ere just then, so I let him try the young un; he popped 'im over a fence or two, and when

he come back he says, 'Well, I'm goin' to have 'im.' Speaks very pleasant, an' don't waste no time—'orse was away before the end of the week. Carry 'im well; 'e's a strong rider, too, and a good plucked one, but bad 'ands, I should say."

"Yes, Pettance; I must go in now. Will you tell Annie I shall be round to-morrow, to see her?"

"Very good, miss. 'Ounds meet at Filly Cross, seven-thirty. So you'll be goin' out?"

"Rather. Good-night."

Flying back across the yard, Gyp thought: '"She rode beautiful!" How jolly. I'm glad he's got my horse.'

XXI

Glowing from her morning in the saddle, she started out next day at noon on her visit to the cottage. It was one of those lingering mellow mornings of late September, when the air, just warmed through, lifts off the stubbles, and the hedgerows are not yet dried of dew. The short cut led across two fields, a narrow strip of village common, where linen was drying on gorse bushes coming into bloom, and one field beyond; she met no one. Crossing the road, she passed into the cottage garden. Sunflowers and Michaelmas daisies in great profusion were tangled along the low red-brick garden walls, under some poplar trees yellow-flecked already. A single empty chair, with a book turned face downward, stood outside an open window. Smoke wreathing from one chimney was the only sign of life. Standing undecided before the half-open door, Gyp was conscious of too much stillness, of something unnatural in the silence. She was just raising her hand to knock, when she heard the sound of smothered sobbing. Peeping through the window, she saw a woman dressed in green, evidently Mrs. Wagge, seated at a table, crying into her handkerchief. And at that moment a low moaning came from the room above. Gyp went in and knocked on the door of the room where the woman in green was sitting. It was opened, and Mrs. Wagge stood there. The nose and eyes and cheeks of her thin, acid face were red, and in her green dress, and with her greenish hair (for it was going grey and she put on it a yellow lotion smelling of cantharides), she seemed to Gyp just like one of those green apples that turn reddish so unnaturally in the sun. Her face shone in streaks, and her handkerchief was still crumpled in her hand. It was horrible to come, fresh and glowing, into the presence of this poor woman, evidently in bitter sorrow. And a desire came over Gyp to fly. It seemed dreadful for anyone connected with *him* to be coming here at all. She said softly:

"Mrs. Wagge? Please forgive me—but is there any news? It was I who got Daphne down here."

The woman before her, evidently torn this way and that, at last answered, with a sniff:

"It—it—was born this morning—dead."

Gyp gasped. To have gone through it all for that! Mother-feeling rebelled and sorrowed; but reason said: Better so! Much better!

"How is she?"

"Bad—very bad. I don't know, I'm sure, what to say—my feelings are all anyhow, and that's the truth. It's so dreadfully upsetting altogether."

"Is my nurse with her?"

"Yes. She's a very headstrong woman, but capable, I don't deny. Daisy's very weak. Oh, it *is* upsetting! And now I suppose there'll have to be a burial. There really seems no end to it. And all because of—of that man." Mrs. Wagge turned away again to cry into her handkerchief.

Gyp stole out. She hesitated whether to go up or no, but at last she mounted softly. It would be in the front room that the bereaved girl was lying—the girl who, but a year ago, had debated with such naïve self-importance whether it was her duty to take a lover. The nurse opened the door an inch, and seeing who it was, slipped through into the corridor.

"You, my dear! That's nice!"

"How is she?"

"Fairly well—considering. You know about it?"

"Yes; can I see her?"

"I hardly think so. I can't make her out. She's got no spirit, not an ounce. She doesn't want to get well, I believe. It's the man, I expect." And, looking at Gyp, she asked: "Is that it? Is he tired of her?"

"Yes, nurse."

The nurse swept her up and down.

"It's a pleasure to look at you. You've got quite a colour, for you. After all, I believe it *might* do her good to see you. Come in!"

Gyp passed in behind her. With eyes closed, fair hair

still damp on the forehead, one white hand lying on the sheet above her heart—a very frail madonna of the sugar-plums! On all that bed the only colour seemed the gold hoop round the wedding finger.

"Look, my dear; I've brought you a nice visitor."

Daphne Wing's eyes and lips opened, and closed again. And the thought went through Gyp: 'Poor thing! She thought it was going to be him, and it's only me!' The white lips said:

"Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen, it's you—it is kind of you!" Again the eyes opened, but very little, differently.

The nurse had slipped away. Gyp sat down, and timidly touched the hand.

Two tears slowly ran down the girl's cheeks.

"It's over," she said just audibly, "and there's nothing now—it was dead, you know. I don't want to live. Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen, why can't they let me die, too?"

Gyp bent over, stroking the hand, unable to bear the sight of those two slowly rolling tears. Daphne Wing murmured on:

"You *are* good to me. I wish my poor little baby were alive."

Gyp raised herself and managed to get out the words:

"Bear up! Think of your work!"

"Dancing!" She gave the least little laugh. "It seems so long ago!"

"Yes; but now it'll all come back to you again."

Daphne Wing answered by a feeble sigh.

With eyes and mouth closed, and all alabaster white, the face was perfect, purged of its little commonnesses. Strange freak that this white flower of a face could ever have been produced by Mr. and Mrs. Wagge!

Daphne Wing opened her eyes.

"Oh! Mrs. Fiorsen, I feel so weak, and lonely—there's nothing anywhere."

Gyp got up, carried into the mood of the girl's heart, and afraid it would be seen.

"When nurse said she'd brought a visitor, I thought

it was him; but I'm glad now. If he had looked at me like he did—I'd have died straight off."

Gyp put her lips to the damp forehead, where, very faint, was still the scent of orange-blossom.

Back in the garden, she hurried away; but, instead of crossing the fields, turned past the side of the cottage into the coppice behind. And, sitting down on a log, her hands pressed to her cheeks and her elbows to her breast, she stared at the sunlit bracken and the flies chasing over it. Love! Was it always hateful and tragic? Darting and taking, and darting away! Or darting one on the other, then breaking away too soon. Did never two dart, seize, and cling, and ever after be one? Love! It had spoiled her father's life, and Daphne Wing's; never came when wanted; always when not. Malevolent wanderer, tiring of the spirit before the body; or the body before the spirit. Better have nothing to do with it—far better! Who that was free would become a slave like Daphne Wing; or like her own husband in his want of a wife who did not love him; or like her father tied—to a memory! And watching the sunlight on the bracken, Gyp thought: 'Love! Keep far from me!'

Every morning she made her way to the cottage, every morning passed through the hands of Mrs. Wagge. The good lady had taken a fancy to her, confiding to the nurse, who confided it to Gyp, that she was "very distangey—and such pretty eyes, quite Italian." She was one of those many whose passion for distinction was a little too much for their dispassionate propriety. Worship of distinction had caused her to foster her young daughter's talent for dancing. Who knew to what it might lead in these days? She explained to Gyp how she had always "brought Daisy up like a lady—and now this is the result." And she would look piercingly at Gyp's hair or ears, hands, or instep. The burial worried her dreadfully. "I'm using the name of Daisy Wing; she was christened 'Daisy' and the Wing's professional, so that takes them both in, and is quite the truth. But I don't think anyone would connect

it, would they? About the father's name, do you think I might say the late Mr. Joseph Wing? You see, it never was alive, and I must put something. I couldn't bear they should guess the truth; Mr. Wagge would be so distressed. It's in his own line, you see. Oh, it is upsetting!"

Gyp murmured: "I don't believe you need put anything."

Though deathly white and spiritless, it soon became clear that Daphne Wing was going to pull through. With each day, more colour and commonness came back. She would, in the end, return to Fulham purged of her infatuation, a little harder, perhaps a little deeper.

On the last day, Gyp wandered again into the coppice, and sat down on the same log. The light shone level on the yellowing leaves all round her; a startled rabbit pelted out of the bracken and back, and, from the far edge of the little wood, a jay cackled harshly, shifting its perch. Now that she was so near having to go back to Fiorsen, she knew that she had not been wise to come. Contact with the girl had made the thought of life with him less tolerable even than before. Only the longing to see her baby made return seem possible. She was very near to loathing at that moment. He, the father of her baby! The thought was ridiculous. That little creature seemed to bind him to her no more than if it were the offspring of some chance encounter, some pursuit of nymph by faun. No! It was hers alone. But a sudden feverish longing to get back to it overpowered all other thought.

Next morning Winton took her back to London. Putting her into the cab, he asked:

"Have you still got your key of Bury Street? Good! Remember, Gyp—any time day or night—there it is for you."

She had wired to Fiorsen, and reached home soon after three. He was not in, and her telegram lay unopened in the hall. She ran up to the nursery. The pathetic sound of some small creature that cannot tell what is hurting it,

met her ears. She went in with the half-triumphant thought: 'Perhaps that's for me!'

Betty, very flushed, was rocking the cradle, and examining the baby's face with a perplexed frown. Seeing Gyp, she gasped:

"Oh, be joyful! Oh, my dear! I *am* glad. I can't do anything with baby since the morning. Whenever she wakes, she cries like that. And till to-day she's been a little model. There, there!"

Gyp took up the baby, whose black eyes fixed themselves on her mother in momentary contentment; but, at the first movement, she began again her fretful plaint. Betty went on:

"She's been like that ever since this morning, when Mr. Fiorsen came in. The fact is, baby don't like it. He stares at her so. This morning I thought—well—I thought: 'You're her father. It's time she was getting used to you.' So I let them be a minute; and when I came back—I was only just across to the bathroom—he was comin' out lookin' quite fierce, and baby—screamin'! And except for sleepin', she's hardly stopped cryin' since."

Pressing the baby to her breast, Gyp sat very still.

"How has he been, Betty?"

Betty plaited her apron; her moon-face troubled.

"Well," she said, "I think he's been drinkin'. Oh, I'm sure he has—I've smelt it about him. The third day it began. And night before last he came in dreadfully late—I could hear him abusing the stairs as he was comin' up. Oh dear—it *is* a pity."

The baby, who had been still since she lay in her mother's lap, suddenly raised her voice again. Gyp said:

"Betty, I believe something hurts her arm. She cries the moment she's touched there. Is there a pin or anything? Just see. Take her things off. Oh—look!"

Both the tiny arms above the elbow were circled with dark marks, as if they had been squeezed by ruthless fingers. The two women looked at each other in horror.

"He!"

Gyp had flushed crimson; her eyes filled but dried at once. At sight of her face, now gone very pale, with lips tightened to a line, Betty stopped her outburst of ejaculation. When they had wrapped the baby's arms in remedies and cotton-wool, Gyp went into her bedroom, and, throwing herself down on her bed, burst into a passion of weeping, smothering it in her pillow.

It was the crying of sheer rage. The brute! To dig his claws into that precious mite! Just because the poor little thing cried at that cat's stare of his! The brute! The devil! And he would come to her and whine about it, and say: "My Gyp, I never meant—how should I know I was hurting? Her crying was so—— Why should she cry at me? I was upset! I wasn't thinking!" She could hear him pleading and sighing to her to forgive him. But she would not—this time! Her fit of crying ceased. She lay listening to the tick of the clock, marshalling a hundred little evidences of his malevolence toward her baby—his own baby. How could he? Was he really going mad? And such chilly shuddering seized her that she crept under the eiderdown. She retained just enough sense of proportion to understand that this, like his insults to Monsieur Harmost, her father and others, were ungovernable accesses of nerve-irritation. But this did not lessen her feeling. Her baby! That tiny thing! She hated him at last; and lay thinking out the coldest, cruellest, most cutting things to say. She had been too long-suffering.

He did not come in that evening; and she went up to bed at ten o'clock. She had a longing to have the baby with her—a feeling that to leave her was not safe. She carried her off, still sleeping, and, locking her doors, got into bed. For a long time she lay awake, expecting every minute to hear him return. She fell asleep at last, and woke with a start. There were vague noises down below. It must be he! She had left the light on in her room, and leaned over to look at the baby's face. It was still sleeping,

drawing its tiny breaths peacefully. Gyp sat up by its side.

Yes; he *was* coming up, and, by the sounds, not sober: —a loud creak, a thud, as if he had clutched at the banisters and fallen; then a muttering, and the noise of boots dropped. She thought: 'If he were quite drunk, he would not have taken them off at all;—nor if he were quite sober. Does he know I'm back?' Another creak, as if he were raising himself by the banisters, a creeping and breathing behind the door—then he fumbled at the door and turned the handle. He must know that she was back, had noticed her travelling-coat or seen the telegram. The handle was tried again, then, after a pause, the handle of the door between his room and hers was fiercely shaken. She could hear his voice, flown with drink, thick, a little drawling.

"Gyp—let me in—Gyp!"

After that, sounds were more confused, as if he were now at one door, now at the other; then creakings, as if on the stairs again; after that, no sound at all.

Fully half an hour Gyp continued to sit up, straining her ears. Where was he? What doing? On her over-excited nerves possibilities came crowding. He must have gone downstairs again. In that half-drunken state, where would his baffled frenzies lead him? And, suddenly, she thought that she smelled burning. It went, and came again; she crept to the door, noiselessly turned the key, and pulling it open a few inches, sniffed.

All was dark on the landing. There was no smell of burning out there. Suddenly, a hand clutched her ankle. All the blood rushed from her heart; she stifled a scream, and tried to pull the door to. But his arm and her leg were caught between, and she saw the black mass of his figure lying full-length on its face. Like a vice his hand held her; he drew himself up on to his knees, on to his feet, and forced his way through. Panting, and in silence, Gyp struggled to drive him out. His drunken strength seemed to come and go in gusts, but hers was

continuous, greater than she had ever thought, and she panted:

"Go! go out of my room—you—you—wretch!"

Then her heart stood still with horror; he had slewed round to the bed and was stretching his hands out above the baby.

She flung herself on him from behind, dragging his arms down, and, clasping her hands together, held him fast. He twisted round in her arms and sat down on the bed. In that moment of his collapse, Gyp snatched up her baby and fled out, down the dark stairs, hearing him stumbling, groping in pursuit. She fled into the dining-room and locked the door, heard him run against it and fall down. Snuggling her baby, who was crying now, inside her nightgown for warmth, she stood rocking and hushing it, trying to listen. There was no sound. By the hearth, whence a little heat still came forth, she cowered down. With cushions and the thick white felt from the dining-table, she made the baby snug, and wrapping her shivering self in the tablecloth, sat staring wide-eyed before her—always listening. There were sounds at first, then none. A long, long time she stayed like that, before she stole to the door. She did not mean to make a second mistake. She could hear the sound of heavy breathing, and listened to it, till she was certain it was the breathing of sleep. Then stealthily she opened, and looked. He was lying against the bottom stair in heavy, drunken slumber. She knew that sleep so well; he would not wake from it.

It gave her a sort of evil pleasure that they would find him like that in the morning when she was gone. Taking the baby, with infinite precaution, she stole past him. Once more in her locked room, she went to the window and looked out. Just before dawn; her garden grey and ghostly—the last time she would see it!

She did her hair and dressed in furs—she was very cold and shivery. She took a few little things she was fondest of and slipped them into her wrist-bag with her purse. She

did everything very swiftly, wondering at her own power of knowing what to take. When she was ready, she scribbled a note to Betty to follow with the dogs to Bury Street, and pushed it under the nursery door. Then, wrapping the baby in jerseys and a shawl, she went downstairs. The dawn had broken, grey light was striking into the hall. She passed Fiorsen's sleeping figure safely, and, for one moment, stopped for breath. He was lying with his back against the wall, his head in the hollow of an arm raised against a stair, his face turned a little upward. That face which, hundreds of times, had been so close to her own, and something about this crumpled body, about his tumbled hair, those cheekbones, and the hollows beneath, about the lips just parted under the dirt-gold of his moustache—something of lost divinity in all that inert figure—clutched for a second at Gyp's heart. Just for a second. It was over, this time! Never again! And, turning stealthily, she slipped her shoes on, opened the front door, took up her burden, closed the door softly behind her, and walked away.

PART III

I

Gyp was going up to town. All the winter and spring she had been at Mildenham, riding, and pursuing her music, seeing hardly anyone except her father; and this departure for London brought her the feeling that comes on an April day, when the sky is blue, with white clouds, and in the fields the grass is warm for the first time. At Widrington a porter entered her carriage, with a kit-bag, an overcoat, and some golf-clubs; and round the door a little group clustered. Gyp noted a tall woman whose blonde hair was going grey, a young girl with a fox-terrier on a lead, a young man with a Scotch terrier under his arm and his back to the carriage. The girl was kissing the Scotch terrier's head.

"Good-bye, old Ossy! Was he nice! Tumbo, keep *down! You're* not going!"

"Good-bye, dear boy! Don't work too hard!"

The young man's answer was not audible, but it was followed by irrepressible gurgles and a smothered:

"Oh, Bryan, you *are*—— Good-bye, dear Ossy!" "Good-bye!" "Good-bye!" The young man got in. Then the train moved. Gyp caught a side view of him, waving his hat from the carriage window. It was her acquaintance of the hunting-field—the "Mr. Bryn Summer'ay," as old Pettance called him, who had bought her horse last year. Seeing him pull down his overcoat, to bank up the old Scotch terrier against the jolting of the journey, she thought: 'I like men who think first of their dogs.' His round head, with curly hair, broad brow, clean-cut lips, gave her again the wonder: 'Where *have* I seen someone like him?' He raised the window, and said:

"How would you like—— Oh, how d you do? We met out hunting. You don't remember me, I expect."

"Yes; perfectly. And you bought my horse last summer. How is he?"

"In great form. I forgot to ask what you called him;

I've named him Hotspur—he'll never be steady at his fences. I remember how he pulled with you that day."

They were silent, smiling.

Looking at the dog, Gyp said:

"*He* looks rather a darling. How old?"

"Twelve. Beastly when dogs get old!"

There was another little silence while he contemplated her with his clear eyes.

"I came over to call once—with my mother; November the year before last. Somebody was ill."

"Yes—I."

"Badly?"

Gyp shook her head.

"I heard you were married——" The little drawl in his voice had increased, as though covering the abruptness of that remark. Gyp looked up.

"Yes; but my little daughter and I live with my father again."

"Ah! What a run that was!"

"Perfect. Was that your mother on the platform?"

"Yes—and my sister Edith. Extraordinary dead-alive place, Widrington; I expect Mildenham isn't much better?"

"It's very quiet, but I like it."

"By the way, I don't know your name now?"

"Fiorsen."

"Oh, yes! The violinist. Life's a bit of a gamble, isn't it?"

Gyp did not answer that odd remark. He took from his pocket a little red book.

"Do you know these? I always take them travelling. Finest things ever written!"

The book was open at these lines:

"*Let me not to the marriage of true minds*
Admit impediment. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove——"

Gyp read on:

"*Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks*
Within his bending sickle's compass come.
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom——"

The sun, far down in the west, shone almost level over wide, whitish-green space, and the spotted cattle browsed or stood by the ditches, lazily flicking their tufted tails. A shaft of sunlight flowed into the carriage, filled with dust motes; and, handing the little book back through that streak of radiance, she said softly:

"Do you read much poetry?"

"More law, I'm afraid. But it is about the finest thing in the world, isn't it?"

"No; I think music."

"Are you a musician? You look as if you might be. I should think you had it badly."

"Thank you. And you haven't it at all?"

"I like opera."

"The hybrid form—and the lowest!"

"That's why it suits me. Don't you like it, though?"

"Yes; that's why I'm going up to London."

"Really? Are you a subscriber?"

"This season."

"So am I. Good—I shall see you."

Gyp smiled. It was long since she had talked to a man of her own age, long since she had seen a face that roused her curiosity and admiration, long since she had been admired. The sun-shaft, shifted by a westward trend of the train, bathed her from the knees up; its warmth increased her light-hearted sense of being in luck.

Much can be talked of in two or three hours of a railway journey! And round them a friendly after-warmth will cling. The difficulty of making themselves heard provoked confidential utterance. The isolation carried their friendship faster and further than any spasmodic acquaint-

anceship of weeks. In that long talk he was far the more voluble. There was too much of which she could not speak. She liked listening to his slightly drawling voice—his audacious wit, the irrepressible bubble of laughter that kept breaking from him. He disclosed his past freely—public-school and college life, efforts at the Bar, his ambitions, tastes, even his scrapes. And in this spontaneous unfolding there was perpetual flattery; Gyp felt through it all a sort of subtle admiration. He asked her, presently, if she played piquet.

"I play with my father nearly every evening."

"Shall we have a game?"

She knew he only wanted to play because he could sit nearer, joined by the evening paper over their knees, hand her the cards after dealing, touch her hand by accident, look in her face. And this was not unpleasant; for she, in turn, liked looking at his face, which had "charm"—that something light and unepiscopal, lacking to so many solid, handsome faces.

When he gripped her hand to say good-bye, she gave his an involuntary little squeeze. Standing by her cab, with a look of frank, rather wistful, admiration on his face, he said:

"I shall see you at the opera, then, and in the Row perhaps; and I may come along to Bury Street, some time, mayn't I?"

Nodding, Gyp drove off through the sultry London evening. Her father was not in, and she went straight to her room. After so long in the country, it seemed very close. Putting on a wrapper, she sat down to brush the train-smoke out of her hair.

For months after leaving Fiorsen, she had felt nothing but relief. Only of late had she begun to see her new position—that of a woman married yet not married; disillusioned, yet in secret seeking a real mate, with every hour that ripens her heart and beauty. Gazing at her face, reflected, intent and mournful, in the mirror, she saw her arid position more clearly than she had ever seen it. What

was the use of being pretty? No longer use to anyone! Not yet twenty-six, and in a nunnery! With a shiver, though not of cold, she drew her wrapper close. This time last year she had at least been in the main current of life. And yet—better far to be derelict like this than go back to him whom memory painted always standing over her sleeping baby, with his arms stretched out and his fingers crooked like claws.

After that early-morning escape, Fiorsen had lurked after her for weeks, in town, at Mildenham, and even in Scotland, when Winton carried her off there. But she had not weakened in her resolution a second time, and he had given up pursuit, and gone abroad. Since then—nothing had come from him, save a few wild or maudlin letters, written evidently during drinking-bouts. Even they had ceased, and for four months she had heard no word. He had "got over" her, it seemed, wherever he was.

She stopped brushing, and thought of that walk with her baby through the empty, silent streets, in the early misty morning last October, of waiting dead-tired, on the pavement, ringing till they let her in. Often, since, she had wondered how fear could have worked her up to that weird departure. Her father and Aunt Rosamund had wanted her to try for a divorce. But her instincts refused to let everyone know her secrets and sufferings—refused the hollow pretence involved, that she had loved him when she never had. It had been her fault for marrying him without love——

"Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds!"

What irony—if her fellow-traveller had only known!

She got up from before the mirror, looking round her room, the same she had always slept in as a girl. So he had remembered her all this time! It had not seemed like meeting a stranger. They were not strangers now, anyway. And, suddenly, on the wall before her, she saw his

face. Of course! How stupid of her not to have known at once! There, in a brown frame, hung a photograph of the celebrated Botticelli or Masaccio "Head of a Young Man" in the National Gallery. She had fallen in love with it years ago, and on the wall of her room it had been ever since. That broad face, the clear eyes, the bold, clean-cut mouth, the audacity—only, the live face was English, not Italian, had more humour, more "breeding," less poetry—something "old Georgian" about it. How he would laugh if she told him he was like that peasant-acolyte with fluffed-out hair, and a little ruching round his neck! Smiling, she plaited her own hair and got into bed.

She could not sleep; she heard her father come in and go up to his room, heard the clocks strike midnight, then one, then two, and always the dull roar of Piccadilly. She had nothing over her but a sheet, and still it was too hot. There was a scent in the room, as of flowers. Where could it come from? She got up at last, and went to the window. There, behind the curtains, was a bowl of cyclamen. Her father's thought—how sweet of him!

And, burying her nose in those blossoms, she remembered her first ball. Perhaps Bryan Summerhay had been there! If he had been introduced to her then, if she had happened to dance with him instead of with that man who had kissed her arm, might she not have felt different towards all men? And if he had admired her—and had not everyone, that night—might she not have liked, perhaps more than liked, him in return? Or would she have looked on him as on all her swains before she met Fiorsen, so many moths fluttering round a candle, foolish to singe themselves! Perhaps she had been bound to have her lesson, to be humbled and brought low!

With a cyclamen blossom to her nose, she went up to that picture. She could just see the outline of the face and the eyes gazing at her: in her heart, something faintly stirred, as a leaf turns over, as a wing flutters. And, blossom and all, she clasped her hands over her breast.

where again her heart quivered with that faint, shy tremor.

It was late, no—early, when she fell asleep and had a strange dream. She was riding her old mare through a field of flowers. She had on a black dress, and round her head a crown of bright, pointed crystals; she sat without saddle, her knee curled up, perched so lightly that she hardly felt the mare's back, and the reins she held were long twisted stems of honeysuckle. Singing as she rode, her eyes flying here and there, over the field, up to the sky, she felt lighter than thistledown; and while they raced along, the old mare kept turning her head and biting at the honeysuckle flowers. Then, suddenly, that chestnut face became the face of Summerhay, looking back at her with his smile. She awoke. Sunlight, through the curtains where she had opened them to find the flowers, was shining on her.

II

Late that same night, Summerhay came out of the little Chelsea house, which he inhabited, and walked towards the river. In certain moods men turn insensibly towards any open space—downs, woods, waters—where the sky is free to the eye. A man is alone when he loves, alone when he dies; nobody cares for one so absorbed, and he cares for nobody, no—not he! Summerhay stood by the river-wall and looked up at the stars through the plane-tree branches. Every now and then he drew a long breath of the warm, unstirring air. And he thought of little, of nothing; but a sweetish sensation beset his heart, a kind of quivering lightness his limbs. He sat down on a bench and shut his eyes. He saw a face—only a face. The lights went out one by one in the houses opposite; no cabs passed now, and scarce a passenger was afoot, but Summerhay sat like a man in a trance, the smile coming and going on his lips; and the air above stirred with the tide flowing up.

It was just coming dawn, when he went in, and, instead of going to bed, sat down to a case in which he was junior on the morrow, and worked right on till it was time to ride before his bath and breakfast. He had one of those constitutions — not uncommon among barristers — that thrive on long spurts. With capacity and a liking for his work, he was on his way to make his name; though, at times, no one could drift more imperturbably on the tides of the moment. He was something of a paradox. He chose to live in that little Chelsea house rather than in the Temple or St. James's, for the sake of solitude; yet he was an excellent companion, whose many friends felt for him an affectionate distrust. To women, he was almost universally attractive, but he had kept heart-free on the whole. He was a gambler, the sort who gets in deep, and then, by a plucky, lucky plunge, gets out again, until some day perhaps—he stays there. His father, a diplomatist, had been dead fifteen years; his mother was well known in the semi-intellectual circles of society. He

had no brothers, two sisters, and an income of his own. Such was Bryan Summerhay at the age of twenty-six, with his wisdom-teeth to cut.

When he started that morning for the Temple, he had still a feeling of extraordinary lightness, still saw that face—its perfect regularity, warm pallor, dark smiling eyes rather wide apart, its fine, small, close-set ears, and the sweep of the black-brown hair across the low brow. Or was it something much less definite he saw—an emanation, a trick, a turn, an indwelling grace, a something that appealed and touched him? It would not let him be, and he did not desire that it should. For this was in his character; if he saw a horse that he liked, he put his money on it whenever it ran; if charmed by an opera, he went to it over and over again; if by a poem, he learned it by heart. And while he walked along the river—his usual route—he had queer sensations, and felt happy.

He was rather late, and went at once into court. In wig and gown, he was notably "old Georgian." A beauty-spot or two, a full-skirted coat, a sword and snuff-box, with that grey wig or its equivalent, and there would have been the eighteenth century—the strong, light build, the breadth of face, brown pallor, clean and unpinched cut of lips, the slight insolence and devil-may-caredom, the clear glance, the bubble of vitality. Almost a pity to have been born so late!

When at last in chambers, he had washed off that special reek of clothes, and parchment, far-away herrings, and distemper, which clings about the Law, dipping his whole curly head in water, and towelling vigorously, he set forth along the Embankment, smoking a cigar. It was nearly seven. Just this time yesterday he had got into the train and seen the face which had refused to leave him since. Fever recurs at certain hours. One could not call at seven o'clock! But he could go up Bury Street on the way to his club!

He passed his boot shop, where, for some time, he had been meaning to give an order, and went by thinking: 'I

wonder where *she* goes for things.' Her figure came to him so vividly—sitting in her corner, or standing by the cab, her hand in his. She had been scented like flowers, and—and a rainy wind! He stood still before a plate-glass window, not taking in at all the reflected image of his frowning, rueful face, and the cigar extinct between his lips. He walked on faster. He came to Bury Street, with a queer, weak sensation down the back of his legs. No flower-boxes this year broke the plain front of Winton's house; nothing whatever but its number and the beating of his heart marked it out for Summerhay from any other dwelling. Turning into Jermyn Street, he felt suddenly morose. His club was at the top of St. James's Street, and he passed at once into the least frequented room. This was the library; and going to the French section, he took down "The Three Musketeers," seating himself with his back to anyone who might come in. His favourite romance might give him warmth and companionship; but he did not read. From where he sat he could throw a stone to where she was sitting perhaps; except for walls he could almost reach her with his voice, certainly see her. This was imbecile! A woman he had only met twice. Imbecile! . . .

"Point of five! Three queens—three knaves! Do you know that thing of Dowson's: 'I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion'? Better than any Verlaine, except '*Les sanglots longs.*' What have you got?"

"Only quart to the queen. Do you like the name 'Cynara'?"

"Yes; don't you?"

"Cynara! Cynara! Ye-es—an autumn, rose-petal, whirling, dead-leaf sound."

"Good! Pipped. Shut up, Ossy—don't snore!"

"Ah, poor old dog! Let him. Shuffle for me, please. Oh! there goes another card!" Her knee touched his——! . . .

The book had dropped—Summerhay started.

Dash it! Hopeless! And, turning round in his huge

arm-chair, he snoozed down into its depths. In a few minutes he was asleep. He slept without a dream.

Two hours later a friend, seeking distraction, came on him, and stood grinning down at that curly head and face which just then had the sleepy abandonment of a small boy's. Maliciously he gave the chair a little kick.

Summerhay stirred, and thought: 'What! Where am I?'

In front of the grinning face, above him floated another, filmy, charming. He shook himself. "Oh, damn you!"

"Sorry, old chap!"

"What time is it?"

"Ten o'clock."

Summerhay uttered an unintelligible sound, and turned over on the other arm. But he slept no more. Instead, he saw her face, heard her voice, and felt again the touch of her warm, gloved hand.

III

At the opera, on Friday evening, they were playing "Cavalleria" and "Pagliacci," which, with "Faust" and "Carmen," were the only operas Winton could not sleep through.

Women's eyes, which must not stare, cover more space than the eyes of men. Gyp had seen Summerhay before he saw her; seen him come in and fold his opera hat against his white waistcoat, looking round, as if for—someone. He looked well in evening clothes. When he sat down, she could still see his profile; and, vaguely watching the Santuzza and the stout Turiddu, she wondered whether, by fixing her eyes on him, she could make him turn. Just then he saw her. It was rather startling to find, after that exchange of looks, that she at once began to want another. Would he like her dress? Was her hair nice? She wished she had not had it washed that morning. But at the interval she did not look round, till his voice said:

"How d'you do, Major Winton?"

Winton had been told of the meeting in the train. He was pining for a cigarette, but had not liked to desert his daughter. After a few remarks, he got up.

"Take my seat a minute, Summerhay, I'm going to have a smoke."

Summerhay sat down. To Gyp it was, queerly, as if house and people vanished, and they two were back again in the railway carriage—alone. Ten minutes to make the most of it! To enjoy the look in his eyes, the sound of his voice and laugh. To laugh, and be nice to him. They were friends.

"There's a picture in the National Gallery I want you to look at," she said, as he was leaving her.

"Will you take me? To-morrow? What time? Three?"

She knew she was flushing, and, with that warmth in her cheeks and a smile in her eyes, had the sensation, so rare and pleasant, of feeling beautiful. Then he was

gone! Her father was slipping back into his stall; and, afraid of her face, she touched his arm:

"Dad, do look at that headdress in the next row but one; did you ever see anything so delicious?"

And while Winton was gazing, the orchestra struck up the overture to "Pagliacci." Watching the progress of that heart-breaking little plot, she felt as if for the first time she understood it with other than her æsthetic sense. Poor Nedda! Poor Canio! Poor Silvio! Her eyes filled with tears. Within those doubled figures of the tragi-comedy she seemed to feel that passionate love—too swift, too strong, too violent, sweet and fearful.

"*Thou hast my heart, and I am thine for ever—*
To-night and for ever I am thine!
What is there left to me? What have I but a heart that is broken?"

La commedia è finita!

While putting on her cloak, her eyes sought Summerhay's. She tried to smile—could not, slowly forced her gaze away, and turned to follow Winton.

She was not late next day from coquetry, she was afraid of letting him think her eager. She saw him at once under the colonnade, and marked the change in his face when he caught sight of her. She led him straight up to the picture. Its likeness to him was not improved by a top hat and modern collar, but it was there still.

"Well!"

"What are you smiling at?"

"I've had a photograph of that ever since I was fifteen; so you see I've known you a long time."

He stared.

"Great Scott! Am I like that? I shall try and find *you* now."

Gyp shook her head.

"There's my most favourite picture, 'The Death of

Procris.' The wonder in the faun's face, Procris's closed eyes; the dog, and the swans, and the pity for what might have been!"

"For what might have been! Did you enjoy 'Pagliacci'?"

"I think I felt it too much."

"I thought so. I watched you."

"Destruction by—love—seems so terrible! Show me your favourites. I can tell you what they are, though."

"Well?"

"The 'Admiral,' for one."

"Yes. What others?"

"The two Bellinis."

"By Jove, you *are* uncanny!"

Gyp laughed.

"You want decision, clarity, colour, and fine texture. Is that right? Here's another of *my* pets."

It was a tiny "Crucifixion" by da Messina—a thin high cross, a thin, humble, suffering Christ, lonely, and actual in the clear, darkened landscape.

"That touches me more than the big, idealized sort. One feels it *was* like that. Oh! And the Francescas! Aren't they lovely?"

He nodded, but his eyes said: "And so are you."

They spent two hours among those endless pictures, almost as alone as in the railway carriage. And when she had refused to let him walk back with her, he stood stock-still beneath the colonnade. The sun streamed in under; the pigeons preened their feathers; people passed in the square, black and tiny against the lions and the great column. He took in nothing of all that. She was like no one he had ever known! Different from girls and women in society! Still more different from anything in the half-world! Not the new sort—college, suffrage! Like no one! And he knew so little of her! Not even whether she had ever really been in love. Her husband—where was he; what was he to her? "The rare, the mute, the inexpressive She!" When she smiled; when

her eyes—but her eyes were too quick for him to see right into them! How beautiful she had looked, gazing at the pictures, her lips just smiling! If he could kiss them! With a sigh, he moved down the grey steps into the sunlight. And London, throbbing with the season's life, seemed to him quite empty. To-morrow—ah, to-morrow he could call!

IV

After that Sunday call, Gyp sat by a bowl of heliotrope, thinking over a passage of words. . . .

"Mrs. Fiorsen, tell me about yourself."

"What do you want to know?"

"Your marriage?"

"I made a fearful mistake—against my father's wish. I haven't seen my husband for months; I shall never see him again if I can help it. Is that enough?"

"You don't love him?"

"No."

"Can't you get free?"

"The Divorce Court! Ugh! I couldn't!"

"Yes, I know—it's hellish!"

He had gripped her hand so hard! . . .

She buried her face in the heliotrope; then, going to the piano, began to play. She was still playing when her father came in. During these past nine months of his daughter's society, Winton had regained a measure of youthfulness, an extra touch of dandyism in his clothes, and in the gloss of his short hair.

"Mr. Summerhay's been here, Dad. He was sorry to miss you."

An appreciable pause.

"My dear, I doubt it."

She could never again be friends with a man without that pause! And, conscious that her father was gazing at her, she said:

"Was it nice in the Park?"

"Thirty years ago they were all nobs and snobs; now God himself doesn't know what they are!"

"But the flowers?"

"Oh! Ah! and the birds—but, by Jove, the humans, Gyp! Tell me, what sort of fellow is young Summerhay?"

"Oh! very nice."

She could always read her father's thoughts quicker

than he could read hers, and knew that he was struggling between the wish that she should have a good time and the desire to convey some kind of warning. With a sigh, he said:

"What does a young man's fancy turn to in summer, Gyp?"

Women, subtle and experienced, can impose restraint on would-be lovers. Gyp knew that a word from her would change everything; but she did not speak it. And yet she saw Summerhay most days—in the Row, at the opera, or at Bury Street. She had a habit of going to St. James's Park in the late afternoon and sitting by the water. One day he passed on his way home from chambers, and, after, they sat there together constantly. Why make her father uneasy by letting him come too often to Bury Street? It was pleasant, out there, talking calmly, while in front of them small ragged children fished and put the fishes into glass bottles, to eat, or watch on rainy days, as is the custom of man with the minor works of God.

When the seasons are about to change, the days pass, tranquil, waiting for the wind that brings in the new. Was it not natural to sit under the trees, by the flowers and the water, the pigeons and the ducks?

V

Summerhay did not wear his heart on his sleeve, and when, on the closing day of term, he left his chambers to walk to that last meeting, his face was much as usual. But, in truth, he had come to a pretty pass. He had his own code. It was perhaps a trifle "Old Georgian," but it forbade his distressing a woman. So far he had kept himself in hand; it had cost him more than he cared to reflect on. The only witness of his struggles was his old Scotch terrier, whose dreams he had disturbed night after night, tramping the long sitting-room of his little house. She must know what he was feeling, and, if she wanted his love, had but to raise her finger; and she had not raised it. When he touched her, when her dress disengaged its perfume or his eyes traced the slow, soft movement of her breathing, his head would go round, and to keep calm and friendly had been torture.

While he could see her almost every day, control had been just possible; now that he was about to lose her—for weeks—his heart felt sick within him. He had been hard put to it, too, before the world. A man passionately in love craves for solitude, oscillating between fierce exercise and that trance-like stillness when he is busy conjuring up her face. He had managed to get through his work, had been grateful for it; but to his friends he had not given attention enough to prevent them saying: "What's up with Bryan Summerhay?" Always rather elusive in his movements, he was now too elusive altogether for those who had been accustomed to lunch, dine, dance, and sport with him. And yet he shunned his own company—going wherever anything distracted him, without demanding real attention. He had come unwillingly to discovery of his passion, which meant giving up so much. And yet he had never asked himself whether Gyp was worth loving. He wanted her exactly as she was; he did not weigh her in any sort of balance.

About her past he dismissed speculation. He had heard

that she was Winton's natural daughter; it had only made him long to punch the head of the scandalmonger. Even her wretched marriage did not matter—nothing mattered except to be with her as much as she would let him. And now she was going to the sea, and he himself to Perthshire to shoot grouse. A month!

Dared he speak? At times, her face was like a child's when it expects some harsh or frightening word. One could not hurt her! But once or twice he had caught a slow soft glance—gone as soon as seen.

Leaning on the river parapet, he watched the tide run down. The sun brightened its yellowish swirl and black eddies—water that had flowed under the willows past Eynsham, past Oxford, below the church at Clifton, past Moulsford, past Sonning. To have her to himself one day on the river—one whole long day! Why had he been so pusillanimous all this time? He passed his hand over his face, and it felt thin to him. If she only knew how he was longing, how he suffered! He turned away, toward Whitehall. He passed two men he knew, one of them just married. They, too, were off to Scotland for the twelfth. How stale and flat seemed that which till then had been the acme of the whole year to him! Ah, but if he had been going to Scotland *with her!*

He entered St. James's Park and passed along the water, making for their usual seat. And suddenly he saw that she was sitting there already. No more craning—he *would* speak!

She was wearing a maize-coloured muslin, and sat leaning back, her knees crossed, one hand resting on the knob of her furled sunshade, her face half hidden by a shady hat. Summerhay went straight up to her.

"Gyp! This can't go on. You know I worship you! If you can't love me, I've got to break away. Gyp, do you want me to go?"

She made a little movement, as if in protest, and answered very low:

"Of course I don't want you to go. How could I?"

"Then you *do* love me?"

"Wait, please. Wait a little longer. When we come back I'll tell you!"

"So long?"

"A month. It's not easy for me." She lifted her eyes to his. "Please not any more now."

That evening at his club, through the smoke of cigarette after cigarette, he saw her face as she had lifted it for that one second; and now he was in heaven, now in hell.

VI

The verandahed bungalow on the South Coast, built for an artist friend of Aunt Rosamund's, had a garden with one pine-tree which had strayed in advance of the wood behind. The house stood in solitude, above a low cliff whence the beach shelved in sandy ridges.

Looking from her bedroom at night, Gyp would get a feeling of being the only creature in the world. The crinkled, silvery sea, that lonely pine-tree, the cold moon, the sky dark cornflower blue, the hiss and sucking rustle of the surf over the beach pebbles, even the salt, chill air, seemed lonely. By day, too—in the hazy heat when the coarse sea-grass hardly quivered, and sea-birds passed close above the water with chuckle and cry—it all often seemed part of a dream. She bathed, and grew as tanned as her little daughter; but she would feel a kind of resentment against all the happy life around her these summer days—the sea-birds, the sunlight, and the waves; the white sails far out; the calm sun-steeped pine-trees; her baby, tumbling and smiling and softly twittering; and Betty and the other servants—all this life that seemed so simple and untortured.

To the one post each day she looked forward terribly. And yet his letters, which began like hers: "My dear friend," might have been read by anyone—almost. Now that he was away from her, would he not feel that it was best to break, and forget her? He had everything before him; could he possibly go on wanting one who had nothing before her? Some blue-eyed girl with auburn hair—that type so superior to her own—would sweep him from her! What then? No worse than it used to be? Ah, so much worse that she dared not think of it!

Then, for five days, no letter came. And she felt a growing ache of longing and jealousy, utterly unlike the mere outraged pride with which she had caught sight of Fiorsen and Daphne Wing in the music-room—so long, it seemed, ago. When on the fifth day the postman left nothing but a bill for little Gyp's shoes, and a note from

Aunt Rosamund at Harrogate, where she had gone with Winton for the annual cure, Gyp's heart sank to the depths. Was this the end? With a blind, numb feeling she wandered out into the wood.

She went along till she could see no outer world for the grey-brown tree-stems streaked with gum-resin; and, throwing herself down on her face, dug her elbows deep into the pine-dust. Tears, rare with her, forced their way up. But crying only made her ill. She turned over on her back and lay motionless. Silent here, even at noon! The sough of the calm sea could not reach so far; the flies were few; no bird sang. The tall bare pine-stems rose like columns in a temple roofed with dark boughs and sky. Cloud-fleeces drifted over the blue. There should be peace—but in her heart was none!

A dusky shape came padding through the trees, another—two donkeys loose from somewhere; they stood licking each other's necks and noses. Humble beasts, friendly, they made her feel ashamed. Why should she be sorry for herself, who had everything in life she wanted—except the love she had thought she would never want? Ah, but she wanted it now, wanted it at last with all her being!

With a shudder she sprang up; the ants had got to her, and she had to pick them off her neck and dress. She wandered back towards the beach. If he had truly found someone to fill his thoughts, and drive her out, she would never, by word or sign, show him that she missed and wanted him—never! She would sooner die!

She came out into the sunshine. It was low tide; and the wet foreshore gleamed with opal tints; there were wandering tracks on the sea, as of serpents writhing beneath the surface; and away to the west the archwayed, tawny rock which cut the line of coast was like a dream-shape. All was dreamy. And, suddenly her heart began beating to suffocation. On the edge of the low cliff, by the side of the path, Summerhay was sitting!

He got up and came towards her. She said calmly:

"Yes; it's I. Did you ever see such a gipsified object? I thought you were still in Scotland. How's Ossy?" Then her self-possession failed.

"It's no good, Gyp. I must know."

It seemed that her heart had given up beating; but she said quietly: "Let's sit down a minute," moving down under the cliff bank where they could not be seen from the house. Drawing the coarse grass-blades through her fingers, she said:

"I didn't try to make you. I never tried."

"No; never."

"It's wrong."

"Who cares? No one could care who loves as I do. Oh, Gyp, can't you love me? I know I'm nothing much. But it's eleven weeks to-day since we met in the train, and I don't think I've had one minute's let-up since."

Gyp sighed.

"Then what is to be done? Look over there—that bit of blue in the grass is my baby daughter. There's her—and my father—and—I'm afraid—afraid of love, Bryan!"

At that first use of his name, Summerhay seized her hand.

"Afraid—how—afraid?"

Gyp said very low:

"I might love too much. Don't say any more now. No; don't! Let's go in and have lunch." And she got up.

He stayed till tea-time, and not a word more of love did he speak. But when he was gone, she sat under the pine-tree with little Gyp on her lap. Love! If her mother had checked love, she herself would never have been born. The midges were biting before she went in. After watching Betty give little Gyp her bath, she crossed the passage to her bedroom and leaned out of the window. Could it have been to-day she had lain on the ground with tears of despair running down her cheeks? Away

to the left of the pine-tree, the moon had floated up, barely visible in the paling sky. A new world, an enchanted garden!

That evening she sat with a book on her lap, not reading; and in her went on the strange revolution of first love—the sinking of "I" into "Thou," the passionate subjection, the intense, unconscious giving-up of will, in preparation for completer union.

She slept without dreaming, awoke heavy and oppressed. Too languid to bathe, she sat listless on the beach with little Gyp all the morning. Had she energy or spirit to meet him in the afternoon by the rock archway, as she had promised? For the first time since she was a small and naughty child, she avoided the eyes of Betty, afraid of her knowing too much. After early tea, she started out; if she did not, he would come, and she did not want the servants to see him two days running.

This last day of August had a warm and still beneficence—the corn all gathered in, the apples mellowing, robins singing already, a few slumberous, soft clouds, a pale blue sky, a smiling sea. She went inland, across the stream. No pines grew on that side, where the soil was richer—of a ruddy brown. In the second crops of clover, already high, humble-bees were hard at work; and the white-throated swallows dipped and soared. Gyp gathered a bunch of chicory flowers. She was close above the shore before she saw him standing in the rock archway below, looking for her across the beach. Away from the hum of bees and flies, it was very quiet here—only the faint hiss of tiny waves. He had not yet heard her coming, and the thought flashed through her: 'If I take another step, it is for ever!' She stood, scarcely breathing, the chicory flowers held before her lips. Then she heard him sigh, and moving quickly forward, said:

"Here I am."

He seized her hand, and, without a word, they passed through the archway. They walked on the hard sand, side by side, scrambled up the low cliff and went along

the grassy top to a gate into a stubble-field. He held it open for her, but, as she passed, caught her in his arms and kissed her lips. To her, who had been kissed a thousand times, it was the first kiss. Deadly pale, she fell back from him against the gate; then, her lips still quivering, with eyes very dark, she looked at him distraught. And suddenly turning round to the gate, she buried her face on her arms. A sob came up in her throat which seemed to tear her to bits; she cried as if her heart would break. His timid despairing touches, his voice close to her ear, imploring, were not of the least avail, she could not stop. That kiss had broken down a barrier in her soul, swept away her life up to that moment, done something terrible and wonderful. At last, she struggled out:

"I'm sorry—so sorry! Don't—don't look at me! Go away a little, and I'll—I'll be all right."

He obeyed without a word, and, passing through the gate, sat down on the cliff with his back to her, looking out over the sea.

Gripping the wood of the old grey gate till it hurt her hands, Gyp gazed at the butterflies chasing in the sunlight towards the crinkly foam edging to the quiet sea till they were but white specks out in the blue.

But she was no nearer to feeling that she could trust herself. What had happened in her was too violent, too sweet, too terrifying. And she said:

"Let me go home now by myself. To-morrow!"

"Whatever you wish, Gyp—always!"

He pressed her hand against his cheek, then, folding his arms tight, resumed his stare at the sea. Gyp did not go in for a long time, sitting in the pine-wood till evening gathered and stars crept out in a sky of that mauve-blue which the psychic say is the soul-garment colour of the good.

Late that night, when she had finished brushing her hair, she opened her window and stepped out on to the verandah. Not a sound from the sleeping house—not a

breath of wind! Her face, her hands, her body, felt as if on fire. The moon was filling every cranny of her brain with wakefulness. The shiver of the surfless sea on a rising tide, rose, fell, rose, fell. The sand cliff shone like a bank of snow. All was inhabited, as a moonlit night is wont to be. A big moth went past her face. A little night beast somewhere was scrattling in the sand. Suddenly the shadow of the pine-trunk moved—moved—ever so little! There, joined to the trunk, Summerhay was standing, his face just visible against the stem, the moonlight on one cheek, a hand shading his eyes. He held it out in supplication. Gyp did not stir, looking straight at that beseeching figure. Then, with a feeling she had never known, she saw him coming. He stood looking up at her. She could see all the workings of his face—passion, reverence, amazement; heard his awed whisper:

"Is it you, Gyp? Really you? You look so young!"

VII

From the moment of surrender, Gyp passed into a state the more enchanted because she had never believed in it, never thought she could love as she now loved. Days and nights went by in a sort of dream. Just as she had never felt it possible to admit the world into the secrets of her married life, so now she did not consider the world at all. But the thought of her father weighed on her conscience. He was back in town. And she felt that she must tell him.

Two days before her month at the bungalow was up, she went, leaving Betty and little Gyp to follow on the last day. Winton, pale from his cure, found her when he came in from the club. She had put on evening dress, and above the pallor of her shoulders, her sun-warmed face and throat had almost the colour of a nectarine. He had never seen her look like that, nor her eyes so full of light. And he uttered a quiet grunt of satisfaction. It was as if a flower, which he had last seen in close and elegant shape, had bloomed in full perfection. She did not meet his gaze quite steadily and all that evening kept putting her confession off. It was not easy—far from easy. At last, when he was smoking his "go-to-bed" cigarette, she sank down beside his chair, leaning against his knee, where her face was hidden, as on that day after her first ball, when she had listened to *his* confession.

"Dad, do you remember my saying once that I didn't understand what you and my mother felt for each other?" Winton did not speak. Gyp went on: "I know now how one would rather die than give someone up."

"Whom? Summerhay?"

"Yes; I used to think I should never be in love, but you knew better."

Better!

In disconsolate silence, he thought rapidly: 'What's to be done? What can I do? Get her a divorce?'

Because of the ring in her voice, or the sheer serious-

ness of the position, he did not resent it, as when he lost her to Fiorsen. Love! A passion such as had overtaken her mother and himself! For this young man? A decent fellow, a good rider—comprehensible! If the course had only been clear! He put his hand on her shoulder and said:

"Well, Gyp, we must go for the divorce, then, after all."

"It's too late. Let *him* divorce me, if he only will!"

Too late? Already! Sudden recollection, that he had not the right, alone kept him silent. Gyp went on:

"I love him, with every bit of me. I don't care what comes—open or secret. I don't care what anybody thinks."

She had turned round to him. This was a Gyp he had never seen! Glowing, soft, quick-breathing, with just that lithe watchful look of the mother cat or lioness whose whelps are threatened. He remembered how, as a child, with face very tense, she would ride at fences that were too big. At last he said:

"I am sorry you didn't tell me sooner."

"I couldn't. I didn't know. Oh, Dad, I'm always hurting you! Forgive me!"

She was pressing his hand to her cheek that felt burning hot. And he thought: 'Forgive! Of course I forgive. That's not the point; the point is——'

A vision beset him of his loved one talked about, bandied from mouth to mouth, or else—for her what there had been for him, a hole-and-corner life, an underground existence of stealthy meetings kept dark, above all from her own little daughter. Ah, not that! And yet—was not even that better than tongues wagging, eyes winking or uplifted in righteousness? Summerhay's world was more or less his world; and scandal, which—like all parasitic growths—flourishes in enclosed spaces, would have every chance. His brain began to search, steely and quick, for some way out; and the expression as when a fox broke covert come on his face.

"Nobody knows, Gyp?"

"Nobody."

That was something! With an irritation that rose from his very soul, he muttered:

"I can't stand it that you should suffer, and that fellow Fiorsen go scot-free. Can you give up seeing Summerhay while we get you a divorce? We might do it, if no one knows. I think you owe it to me, Gyp."

Gyp got up and stood by the window a long time without answering. Winton watched her face. At last she said:

"I couldn't. We might stop seeing each other; it isn't that. It's what I should feel. I shouldn't respect myself after. Oh, Dad, don't you see? He really loved me in his way. And to pretend! To make out a case for myself, tell about Daphne Wing, about his drinking, and baby; pretend that I wanted him to love me, when I got to hate it and didn't care really whether he was faithful or not—and knowing all the while that I've been everything to someone else! I'd much rather let him know, and ask him to divorce me."

Winton replied:

"And suppose he won't?"

"Then my mind would be clear, anyway; and we would take what we could."

"And little Gyp?"

Staring before her as if trying to see into the future, she said slowly:

"Some day she'll understand. Or perhaps it will be all over before she knows. Does happiness ever last?"

She bent over, kissed his forehead, and went out. The warmth from her lips, and the scent of her, remained with Winton as if wafted from the past.

Was there then nothing to be done? Men of his stamp do not, as a rule, see very deep even into those who are nearest to them; but to-night he saw his daughter's nature more fully than ever before. No use to importune her to act against her instincts! And yet—to sit

and watch it all—watch his own passion with its ecstasy and its heart-burnings re-enacted in her—perhaps for many years? The old vulgar saying passed through his mind: "What's bred in the bone will come out in the meat." Now she had given, she would give with both hands—beyond measure—beyond!—as he himself, as her mother had given! Ah, well, she was better off than his own loved one had been. One must not go ahead of trouble, or cry over spilled milk!

VIII

Gyp lay wakeful. The question of telling Fiorsen kept her thoughts in turmoil. Was he likely to divorce her if she did? His contempt for what he called "these *bourgeois* morals," his instability, the very unpleasantness and offence to his vanity—all would prevent him. No; he would not divorce her, she was sure, unless by chance he wanted legal freedom, which was so unlikely. What then would be gained? Had she any right to ease her conscience if it brought harm to her lover—conscience, too, in regard to one who, within a year of marriage, had taken to himself a mistress, and not even spared the home paid for and supported by his wife? No; if she told Fiorsen, it would only be to salve her pride, wounded by doing what she did not avow.

She came down to breakfast, no whit advanced towards decision. Neither of them mentioned their last night's talk, and Gyp went back to her room to busy herself with dress, after those weeks away. It was past noon when, at a muffled knock, she found Markey outside her door.

"Excuse me, m'm."

Gyp beckoned him in. Markey closed the door.

"Mr. Fiorsen—in the hall, m'm—slipped in when I answered the bell; short of shoving, I couldn't keep him out."

"Is my father in?"

"No, m'm; the major's gone to the fencin'-club."

"What did you say?"

"Said I would see. So far as I was aware, nobody was in. Shall I have a try to shift him, m'm?"

Gyp shook her head.

"Say no one can see him."

Markey's woodcock eyes, under their thin, dark, twisting brows, fastened on her dolefully; he opened the door to go. Fiorsen was standing there, and, with a quick movement, came in. She saw Markey raise his

arms as if to catch him round the waist, and said quietly:

"Markey—wait outside, please."

When the door was shut, she retreated against her dressing table and stood gazing at her husband; her heart throbbed as if it would leap through its coverings.

He had grown a short beard, his cheeks seemed a little fatter, and his eyes surely more green; otherwise, he looked much as she remembered him. And her first thought was: 'Why did I ever pity him? He'll never fret or drink himself to death—he's got enough vitality for twenty men.'

The fixed nervous smile on his face passed; his eyes roved round the room in the old half-fierce, half-furtive way.

"Well, Gyp," he said, and his voice shook a little: "At last! Won't you kiss me?"

How idiotic! Suddenly she felt quite cool.

"If you want to speak to my father—he's out."

Fiorsen gave one of his fierce shrugs.

"Look, Gyp! I returned from Russia yesterday. I made a lot of money out there. Come back to me! I will be good—I swear it. Ah, Gyp, come back to me, and see how good I will be! I will take you abroad, you and the *bambina*. We will go to Rome—anywhere you like—live how you like. Only come back to me!"

Gyp answered stonily:

"You are talking nonsense."

"Gyp, I swear I have not seen a woman fit to put beside you. Be good to me once more. This time I will not fail. Try me! Try me!"

At his tragic tones, which seemed to her both false and childish, Gyp realised the strength of the new feeling in her heart. And the more that feeling throbbed within her, the harder her face and her voice grew.

"If that is all you came to say—please go. I will never come back to you. Once for all, understand, *please*."

His silence impressed her far more than his appeal;

with one of his stealthy movements he came quite close, and putting his face forward till it almost touched her, said:

"You are my wife. I want you back. I must have you. If you don't come, I will kill myself, or you."

And suddenly his arms, knotted behind her back, crushed her to him. She stifled a scream; then, very swiftly, took a resolve, and, rigid in his arms, said:

"Let go; you hurt me. Sit down quietly. I will tell you something."

The tone of her voice made him loosen his grasp and crane back to see her face. Gyp detached his arms, sat down on an old oak chest, and motioned him to the window-seat. Her heart thumped pitifully; waves of almost physical sickness passed through and through her. She had smelt brandy in his breath when he was close to her. It was like being in the cage of a wild beast; it was like being with a madman! The remembrance of his fingers stretched out like claws above her baby was so vivid at that moment, that she could scarcely see him, sitting there, waiting for what she was going to say. Fixing her eyes on him, she said softly:

"You say you love me, Gustav. I tried to love you, too, but I never could—never from the first. I tried very hard. Surely you care what a woman feels, even if she happens to be your wife."

She saw his face quiver, and went on:

"When I found I couldn't love you, I felt I had no right over you. I didn't stand on my rights, did I?"

Again his face quivered, and again she hurried on:

"But you wouldn't expect me to go all through my life without ever feeling love—you who've felt it so many times?" Then, clasping her hands tight, with wonder at herself, she murmured: "I *am* in love. I have given myself."

He made a queer, whining sound, covering his face. The beggar's tag: "'Ave a feelin' 'eart, gentleman—'ave a feelin' 'eart!" passed through Gyp's mind.

Would he get up and strangle her? Should she dash to the door—call out? For a long, miserable moment she watched him swaying on the window-seat, with his face covered. Then, without looking at her, he crammed a clenched hand up against his mouth, and rushed from the room.

Through the open door Gyp had a glimpse of Markey's motionless figure, coming to life as Fiorsen passed. She locked the door, and lay down on her bed. Her heart beat dreadfully. If on this shock he began to drink, what might not happen? He had said something wild. But what right had he to feel jealous rage against her? What right? She went to the glass, trembling, and mechanically tidied her hair. Miraculous that she had come through unscathed!

Summerhay was to meet her at three o'clock by the seat in St. James's Park. But all was different, now; difficult and dangerous! She must wait, take counsel with her father. Yet, if she did not keep that tryst, he would be anxious—thinking of what had happened to her; thinking, perhaps—oh, foolish!—that she had forgotten, or even repented of her love. What would she herself think, if he were to fail her at their first tryst after those days of bliss? That he had changed his mind, seen she was not worth it, seen that to a woman who could give herself so soon, so easily, he could not sacrifice his life.

In this cruel uncertainty she spent the next two hours, till it was nearly three. If she did not go, he would come on to Bury Street, which would be still more dangerous. She put on her hat and walked swiftly towards St. James's Palace. Once sure that she was not being followed, her courage rose. She was ten minutes late, and saw him walking up and down, turning his head every few seconds so as not to lose sight of the bench. When they had greeted with that pathetic casualness of lovers which deceives so few, they walked on together into the Green Park, beneath the trees. She

told him about her father; but only when his hand was holding hers under cover of the sunshade that lay across her knee, did she speak of Fiorsen.

He dropped her hand, and said:

"Did he touch you, Gyp?"

Gyp heard that question with a shock. Touch her! Yes!

He made a shuddering sound. His hands and teeth were clenched. She said softly:

"Bryan! Don't! I wouldn't let him kiss me."

He seemed to have to force his eyes to look at her.

"It's all right."

She sat motionless, cut to the heart. She was soiled, and spoiled for him! Of course! But her heart had never been touched; it was his utterly. Not enough for a man—he wanted an untouched body, too. That she could not give; he should have thought of that sooner, instead of only now. And, miserably, she stared before her.

A little boy came and stood still in front of them, with round, unmoving eyes. He had a slice of bread and jam in his hand, and his mouth and cheeks were smeared with red. A woman called: "Jacky! Come on, now!" He was hauled away, still looking back, holding out his bread and jam as though offering her a bite. Summerhay's arm slipped round her.

"It's over, darling. Never again—I promise you!"

Ah, he might promise—might even keep that promise. But he would suffer—always suffer, thinking of that other. And she said:

"You can only have me as I am, Bryan. I can't make myself new for you; I wish I could—oh, I wish I could!"

"Don't think of it! Come home to me and have tea—there's no one there. Come!"

He took her hands. And all else left Gyp but the joy of being close to him.

IX

Passing Markey like a blind man, Fiorsen made his way into the street: he had not gone a hundred yards before he was hurrying back. He had left his hat. The servant, still standing there, handed him that wide-brimmed object and closed the door in his face. He went towards Piccadilly. But for the expression on Gyp's face, what might he not have done? Mixed with sickening jealousy, he felt relief, as if he had been saved from something horrible. So she had never loved him! Never at all? Impossible that a woman on whom he had lavished such passion should never have felt any in return! Images of her passed before him—surrendering, surrendering. It could not all have been pretence! He was not a common man—he had charm—or, other women thought so! She had lied; she must have lied!

He went into a café and asked for a *fine champagne*. They brought him a carafe, with the measures marked. He sat there a long time. When he rose, he had drunk nine, and felt a kind of ferocity pleasant in his veins, a kind of nobility pleasant in his soul. Let her love! But let him get his fingers on her lover's throat! He stopped in his tracks. There on a sandwich-board in front of him were the words: "Daphne Wing. Pantheon. Daphne Wing. Plastic Danseuse. Poetry of Motion. To-day at three o'clock. Pantheon. Daphne Wing."

She had loved him—little Daphne! It was past three. Going in, he took his place in the stalls, close to the stage, with a bitter amusement. This was irony indeed! Here she came! A Pierrette—in short, diaphanous muslin, her face whitened to match it; a Pierrette who stood slowly spinning on her toes, with arms raised and hands joined in an arch above her glistening hair.

An idiotic pose! But there was the old expression on her face, limpid, dovelike. And that something divine about her dancing smote Fiorsen through all the imbecility of her posturings. Across and across she flitted, pirouet-

ting, and caught up at intervals by a Pierrot in black tights with a face whitened as her own, held upside down, or right end up with one knee bent sideways, and the toe of a foot pressed against the ankle of the other, and arms arched above her. Then, with Pierrot's hands grasping her waist, she would stand upon one toe and slowly twiddle, lifting her other leg toward the roof, while the trembling of her form manifested to all how hard it was; then, off the toe, she capered out to the wings, and capered back, wearing on her face that lost, dovelike look, while her perfect legs gleamed white. On the stage she was adorable! Raising his hands high, Fiorsen clapped and called out: "*Brava!*" He marked the sudden roundness of her eyes, a tiny start—no more. She had seen him. 'Some don't forget me!' he thought.

She came on for her second dance, assisted this time by her own image reflected in a little weedy pool about the middle of the stage. "Ophelia's last dance." Fiorsen grinned. In a clinging sea-green gown, cut here and there to show her inevitable legs, with marguerites and cornflowers in her unbound hair, she circled her own reflection, languid, pale, desolate; then slowly gaining the abandon needful to full display, danced with frenzy till, in a gleam of limelight, she sank into the apparent water and floated among paper water-lilies on her back. Lovely she looked there, with her eyes still open, her lips parted, her hair trailing behind. Again Fiorsen raised his hands high to clap, again called out: "*Brava!*" The curtain fell, and Ophelia did not take her call. Was it the sight of him, or was she preserving the illusion that she was drowned? That "arty" touch would be just like her.

With an audible "Pish!" at the two comedians in calico, beating each other about the body, he rose, and made his way out. He scribbled on a card, "Will you see me?—G. F." and took it round to the stage-door. The answer came back:

"Miss Wing will see you in a minute, sir."

Leaning against the distempered wall of the draughty corridor, Fiorsen wondered why the devil he was there, what the devil she would say.

She was standing with her hat on, while her "dresser" buttoned her patent-leather shoes. Holding out her hand above the woman's back, she said:

"Oh, Mr. Fiorsen, how do you do?"

Fiorsen took the little moist hand; his eyes passed over her, avoiding a direct meeting with her eyes. Her face was the same, yet not the same—harder, more self-possessed; only her perfect, supple little body was as it had been. The dresser murmured: "Good-afternoon, miss," and went.

Daphne Wing smiled faintly.

"I haven't seen you for a long time, have I?"

"No; I've been abroad. You dance as beautifully as ever."

"Oh, yes; it hasn't hurt my dancing."

With an effort he looked her in the face. Was this really the same girl who had clung to him, cloyed him with her kisses, her tears, her appeals for love—just a little love? Ah, but she was more desirable, much more desirable than he had remembered! And he said:

"Give me a kiss, little Daphne!"

Daphne Wing did not stir; her white teeth rested on her lower lip; she said:

"Oh, no, thank you! How is Mrs. Fiorsen?"

Fiorsen turned abruptly:

"There is none."

"Oh, has she divorced you?"

"No. Stop talking of her; stop talking, I say!"

Daphne Wing, still motionless in the centre of her little crowded dressing-room, said, in a matter-of-fact voice:

"You are polite, aren't you? It's funny; I can't tell whether I'm glad to see you. I had a bad time, you know; and Mrs. Fiorsen was an angel. Why do you come to see me now?"

Exactly! Why had he come? The thought flashed through him: 'She'll help me to forget.' And he said:

"I was a great brute to you, Daphne. I came to make up."

"Oh, no; you can't make up—thank you!" She began drawing on her gloves. "You taught me a lot, you know. I ought to be quite grateful. Oh, you've grown a little beard! D'you think that improves you? It makes you look rather like Mephistopheles, I think."

Fiorsen stared fixedly at that perfectly shaped face, where a faint, underdone pink mingled with the fairness of the skin. Was she mocking him? She—so matter-of-fact!

"Where do you live now?" he said.

"I'm on my own, in a studio. You can come and see it, if you like. Only you'd better understand. I've had enough of love."

Fiorsen grinned.

"Even for another?" he said.

Daphne Wing answered calmly:

"I wish you would treat me like a lady."

Fiorsen bit his lip.

"May I have the pleasure of giving you some tea?"

"Yes, thank you; I'm very hungry. I don't eat lunch on matinée days; I find it better not. Do you like my Ophelia dance?"

"Artificial."

"Yes—it's done with mirrors and wire netting, you know. But do I give you the illusion of being mad?" Fiorsen nodded. "I'm so glad. Shall we go? I do want my tea."

She turned round, scrutinised herself in the glass, touched her hat with both hands, revealing, for a second, all the poised beauty of her figure, took a little bag from the back of a chair, and said:

"I think, if you don't mind going on, it's less conspicuous. I'll meet you at Ruffel's—they have lovely things there. *Au revoir.*"

Bewildered, irritated, queerly meek, Fiorsen passed down Coventry Street, and entering the empty Ruffel's, took a table near the window. A sudden vision of Gyp sitting on that oaken chest, at the foot of her bed, blotted the girl clean out, till, looking up, he saw Daphne Wing outside, gazing at the cakes in the window. She came in.

"Oh, here you are! I should like iced coffee and walnut cake, and some of those marzipan sweets—oh, and some whipped cream with my cake. Do you mind?" And, sitting down, she fixed her eyes on his face.

"Where have you been abroad?"

"Stockholm, Budapest, Moscow, other places."

"How perfect! Oh! Do you think I'm very English?"

"Utterly. Your kind of——" He was not quite capable of adding—"your kind of vulgarity could not be produced anywhere else."

"My kind of beauty?"

Fiorsen grinned and nodded.

"Oh, I think that's the nicest thing you ever said to me! Only, of course, I should like to think I'm more of the Greek type—pagan, you know."

Her profile at that moment, against the light, was very pure and soft in line. And he said:

"I suppose you hate me, little Daphne? You ought to hate me?"

Daphne Wing's round, blue-grey eyes passed over him much as they had been passing over the marzipan.

"No; I don't hate you—now. Of course, if I had any love left for you, I should. Oh, isn't that Irish? But one can think anybody a rotter without hating them, can't one?"

"So you think me a 'rotter'?"

"But aren't you? You couldn't be anything else—could you?—with the sort of things you did."

"And yet you don't mind having tea with me?"

Daphne Wing, who had begun to eat, said with her mouth full:

"You see, I'm independent now, and I know life. That makes you harmless."

Fiorsen stretched out his hand and seized hers just where her little warm pulse was beating very steadily. She looked at it, changed her fork over, and went on eating with the other hand. Fiorsen drew his away as if he had been stung.

"You *have* changed—that is certain!"

"Yes; you wouldn't expect anything else, would you? You see, one doesn't go through that for nothing. I think I was a dreadful little fool——" She stopped, with her spoon on its way to her mouth—"and yet——"

"I love you still, little Daphne."

A faint sigh escaped her.

"Once I would have given a lot to hear that."

And, turning her head away, she picked a large walnut out of her cake and put it into her mouth.

"Are you coming to see my studio? I've got it rather nice and new. I'm making twenty-five a week; my next engagement, I'm going to get thirty. I should like Mrs. Fiorsen to know—— Oh, I forgot; you don't like me to speak of her! Why not? I wish you'd tell me!" Gazing at his furious face, she went on: "I'm not a bit afraid of you now. I used to be. Oh, how is Count Rosek? Is he as pale as ever? Aren't you going to have anything more? You've had hardly anything. D'you know what I should like—a chocolate éclair and a raspberry ice-cream soda with a slice of tangerine in it."

When she had slowly sucked up that beverage, prodding the slice of tangerine with her straws, they went out and took a cab. On that journey to her studio, Fiorsen tried to possess himself of her hand, but, folding her arms across her chest, she said quietly:

"It's very bad manners to take advantage of cabs." Withdrawing sullenly, he watched her askance. Was she playing with him? Or had she really ceased to care the snap of a finger? It seemed incredible. The cab,

which had been threading the maze of Soho streets, stopped. Daphne Wing alighted, proceeded down a narrow passage to a green door on the right, and, opening it with a latch-key, paused to say:

"I like it's being in a little sordid street—it takes away all amateurishness. It wasn't a studio, of course; it was the back part of a paper-maker's. Any space conquered for art is something, isn't it?" She led the way up a few green-carpeted stairs, into a large room with a skylight, whose walls were covered in Japanese silk the colour of yellow azaleas. Here she stood for a minute without speaking, as though lost in the beauty of her home; then, pointing to the walls, she said:

"It took me ages, I did it all myself. And look at my little Japaneses trees; aren't they dickies?" Six little dark abortions of trees were arranged scrupulously on a lofty window-sill, whence the skylight sloped. She added suddenly: "I think Count Rosek would like this room. There's something bizarre about it, isn't there? I wanted to surround myself with that, you know—to get the bizarre note into my work. It's so important nowadays. But through there I've got a bedroom and a bathroom and a little kitchen with everything to hand, all quite domestic; and hot water always on. My people are *so* funny about this room. They come sometimes, and stand about. But they can't get used to the neighbourhood; of course it *is* sordid, but I think an artist ought to be superior to that."

Suddenly touched, Fiorsen answered:

"Yes, little Daphne."

She looked at him, and another tiny sigh escaped her.

"Why did you treat me like you did?" she said. "It's such a pity, because now I can't feel anything at all." And she suddenly passed the back of her hand across her eyes. Really moved, Fiorsen went toward her, but she put out her hand to keep him off, with half a tear glistening on her eyelashes.

"Please sit down on the divan. Will you smoke?

These are Russians." And she took a white box of pink-coloured cigarettes from a little golden birchwood table. "I have everything Russian and Japanese; I think they help more than anything with atmosphere. I've got a balalaika; you can't play on it, can you? What a pity! If only I had a violin! I *should* have liked to hear you play again." She clasped her hands: "Do you remember when I danced to you before the fire?"

Fiorsen remembered very well. The pink cigarette trembled in his fingers, and he said rather hoarsely:

"Dance to me now, Daphne!"

She shook her head.

"I don't trust you a yard. Nobody would—would they?"

Fiorsen started up.

"Then why did you ask me here? What are you playing at, you little——?" With round unmoving eyes, she said calmly:

"I thought you'd like to see that I'd got over it—that's all. But, of course, if you don't, you needn't stop."

Fiorsen sank back on the divan. A conviction that everything she said was literal had begun slowly to sink into him. He puffed smoke out with a laugh.

"What are you laughing at?"

"I was only thinking that you are as great an egoist as I."

"I want to be. It's the only thing, isn't it?"

Fiorsen laughed again.

"You needn't worry. You always were."

She had seated herself on a stool, and answered gravely:

"I wasn't, while I loved you. But it didn't pay, did it?"

"It has made a woman of you, Daphne. Your face is different. Your mouth is prettier. All over, you are prettier." Pink came up in Daphne Wing's cheeks. Encouraged by that flush, he went on warmly: "If you

loved me now, I should not tire of you. Oh, you can believe me! I——"

She shook her head.

"We won't talk about love, will we? Did you have a big triumph in Moscow and St. Petersburg? It must be wonderful to have really great triumphs!"

Fiorsen answered gloomily:

"I made a lot of money."

"Oh, I expect you're very happy."

Did she mean to be ironic?

"I'm miserable."

He got up and went towards her. She looked up in his face.

"I'm sorry if you're miserable. I know what it feels like."

"You can help me not to be. Little Daphne, you can help me to forget." He had stopped, and put his hands on her shoulders. Without moving, she answered:

"I suppose it's Mrs. Fiorsen you want to forget?"

"As if she were dead. Let it all be as it was, Daphne! You have grown up; you are a woman now, an artist."

Daphne Wing had turned her head towards the stairs.

"That was the bell. Suppose it's my people? It's just their time! Oh, isn't that awkward?"

Fiorsen recoiled against the wall. With his head touching one of the little Japanese trees, he stood biting his fingers.

"My mother's got a key, and it's no good putting you anywhere, because she always has a good look round. But perhaps it isn't them. Besides, I'm not afraid now; it makes a wonderful difference being on one's own."

She disappeared. Fiorsen could hear a woman's acid voice, a man's, rather hoarse and greasy, the sound of a smacking kiss. He stood at bay. Trapped! The little dovelike devil! He saw a lady in a green silk dress, shot with beetroot colour, a short, thick gentleman with a round, greyish beard, in a grey suit, having a small dahlia

in his buttonhole, and, behind them, Daphne Wing, flushed, and round-eyed. He took a step, intending to escape without more ado. The gentleman said:

"Introduce us, Daisy. I didn't catch—Mr. Dawson? How do you do, sir? One of my daughter's impresarios, I think. 'Appy to meet you, I'm sure."

Fiorsen bowed. Mr. Wagge's small piggy eyes fixed themselves on the dwarf trees.

"She's got a nice little place here for her work—quiet and unconventional. I hope you think well of her talent, sir? You might go further and fare worse, I believe."

Again Fiorsen bowed.

"You may be proud of her," he said; "she is the rising star."

Mr. Wagge cleared his throat.

"Ow," he said; "ye-es! From a little thing we thought she had stuff in her. I've come to take a great interest in her work. Not in my line, but she's a sticker, and I like to see perseverance. Where you've that, you've 'alf the battle of success. So many of these young people seem to think life's all play. You must see a lot of that in your profession, sir."

"Robert! The name was not *Daw*son."

A long moment. On the one side was that vinegary woman poking her head forward like an angry hen; on the other, Daphne, her eyes round, her cheeks red, her hands clasped to her perfect breast; in the centre, a broad, grey-bearded figure, with reddening face, angry eyes, and hoarsening voice:

"You scoundrel! You infernal scoundrel!" It lurched, raising a pudgy fist. Fiorsen sprang down the stairs, wrenched open the door, and sped away.

X

That same evening, from the corner of Bury Street, Summerhay watched Gyp going swiftly to her father's house. Gone! The longing to have her always with him was growing fast. Since her husband knew—why wait? There would be no rest for either of them, with the menace of that fellow. She must come away with him abroad—till things had declared themselves; and then he would find a place where they could live and she feel safe and happy. For this he must set his affairs in order. And he thought: 'No good doing things by halves. Mother must know. The sooner the better!' With a grimace, he set out for his aunt's house in Cadogan Gardens, where his mother always stayed when in town.

Lady Summerhay was waiting for dinner and reading a book on dreams. A red-shaded lamp cast a mellow tinge over her grey frock, one reddish cheek and one white shoulder. Important, with blonde hair just turning grey, she had married young and been a widow fifteen years—a naturally free spirit netted by association with people of public position. Bubbles were still rising from her submerged soul that would not again set eyes on the horizon. Neither narrow nor illiberal, as people in society go, she judged everything now as those of public position must—discussion, of course, but no alteration in one's way of living. The countless movements in which she and her friends were interested for the emancipation and the benefit of others, were, in fact, only conduit-pipes for letting off superfluous goodwill and the directing spirit bred in her. She acted in terms of the public good, regulated by what people of position said at lunch and dinner. It was not her fault that such people lunched and dined. When her son kissed her, she held up the book, and said:

"I think this man's book disgraceful; he runs his sex-idea to death. We aren't all so obsessed as that. He ought to be put in his own lunatic asylum."

Summerhay answered:

"I've got bad news for you, Mother."

Lady Summerhay searched his face apprehensively. She knew that expression, that poise of his head, as if butting. He looked like that when he came to her in gambling scrapes.

"The people at Mildenham, Major Winton and his daughter—I'm in love with her—I'm her lover."

Lady Summerhay gasped.

"Bryan!"

"That fellow she married drinks. She had to leave him a year ago, with her baby—other reasons, too. Look here, Mother: this is hateful, but you'd got to know. There's no chance of a divorce." His voice grew higher. "Don't try to persuade me out of it. It's no good."

Lady Summerhay, from whose comely face the frock, as it were, had slipped, clasped her hands.

The swift descent of "life" on one to whom it had ever been a series of "cases" was cruel, and her son felt this without quite realising why. An abominably desolate piece of news! Taking her hand, he put it to his lips.

"Cheer up, Mother! She's happy, and so am I."

Lady Summerhay could only murmur:

"Is there—is there going to be a scandal?"

"I hope not; but, anyway, *he* knows about it."

"Society doesn't forgive."

"Awfully sorry for *you*, Mother."

"Oh, Bryan!"

The repetition jarred his nerves.

"You needn't tell anybody. We don't know what'll happen yet."

In Lady Summerhay all was sore and blank. A woman she had never seen, whose origin was doubtful, whose marriage must have soiled her, some kind of a siren, no doubt! Too hard! She believed in her son, had dreamed of public position for him, felt he would attain it as a matter of course. She said feebly:

"This Major Winton is a man of breeding, isn't he?"

"Rather! She's good enough for anyone. And the proudest woman I've ever met. If you're bothering as to what to do about her—don't! She won't want anything of anybody—I can tell you. She won't accept crumbs."

"That's lucky!" But, gazing at her son, Lady Summerhay became aware that she stood on the brink of a downfall in his heart. She said coldly:

"Are you going to live together openly?"

"If she will."

"You don't know yet?"

"I shall—soon."

The book on dreams slipped off her lap. She went to the fireplace and stood looking at her son. His merry look was gone; his face was strange to her. She remembered it like that once in the park at Widrington, when he lost his temper with a pony and came galloping past her, his curly hair stivered up like a little demon's. She said sadly:

"You can hardly expect me to like it for you, Bryan, even if she is what you say. And isn't there some story?"

"The more there is against her, the more I love her."

Lady Summerhay sighed.

"What is this man going to do? I heard him play once."

"Morally and legally, he's out of court. I only wish to God he *would* bring a case, and I could marry her; but Gyp says he won't."

"Gyp? Is that her name?" A sudden longing, not friendly, to see this woman seized her. "Will you bring her to see me? I'm alone here till Wednesday."

"I don't think she'll come. Mother, she's wonderful!"

A smile twisted his mother's lips. No doubt! Aphrodite! And—afterwards?

"Does Major Winton know?"

"Yes."

"What does he say to it?"

"From your point of view, or his, it's rotten. But in her position, everything's rotten."

The flood-gates gave way in Lady Summerhay; she poured forth a stream of words.

"Oh, my dear, can't you pull up? I've seen so many of these affairs go wrong. It really is not for nothing that law and conventions are what they are. The pressure's too great. It's only once in a way—very exceptional people, very exceptional circumstances. You mayn't think now that it'll hamper you, but it will—most fearfully. If you were a writer or an artist, who could take his work where he likes, live in a desert if he wants; but you've got to do yours here in London. Do think, before you go butting up against society! It's all very well to say it's no affair of anyone's, but you'll find it is, Bryan. Can you possibly make her happy in the long run?"

She stopped at the expression on his face.

"Mother, you don't seem to understand. I'm devoted so that there's nothing else for me."

"You mean bewitched."

"I mean what I say. Good-night!"

"Won't you stay to dinner, dear?"

But he was gone, and vexation, anxiety, wretchedness, came on Lady Summerhay. She went to her dinner desolate and sore.

Summerhay made straight for home. The lamps were brightening in the early-autumn dusk; a draughty, ruffling wind flicked a yellow leaf here and there from off the plane-trees. Evening blue stained the colour of the town—the hour of fusion when day's hard and staring shapes are softening, growing dark, mysterious, and all that broods behind the lives of men and trees and houses comes down on the wings of illusion, and the poetry in a man wells up. But Summerhay still heard

his mother's voice, and knew that his hand was against everyone's. There was a difference, it seemed to him, in the expression of each passer-by. Nothing any more would be a matter of course; and so far everything had been a matter of course. He did not realise this clearly yet; but had begun to take what nurses call "notice," forced on to the defensive against society.

Putting his latch-key into the lock, he recalled his sensation that afternoon, opening to Gyp for the first time, furtive, defiant. It would all be defiance now. Lighting a fire in his sitting-room, he began pulling out drawers, sorting and destroying, burning, making lists, packing papers. Finishing, he sat down to smoke. The room was quiet, and Gyp seemed to fill it with her presence. By closing his eyes he could see her there by the hearth, as she stood before they left, turning her face up to him. The more she loved him, the more he would love her! And he said aloud: "By God!" The old Scotch terrier, Ossian, came from his corner and shoved his long black nose into his master's hand.

"Come along up, Ossy! Good dog, Oss!" And comforted by the warmth of that black body beside him in the chair, Summerhay fell asleep in front of the fire smouldering with his past.

XI

Though Gyp had never seemed to look round, she had been quite conscious of Summerhay standing where they had parted, watching her into the house in Bury Street. The strength of her own feeling surprised her, as a bather in the sea is surprised, finding her feet will not touch bottom, carried away by the tide.

For the second night running, she hardly slept, hearing Big Ben boom, hour after hour. At breakfast, she told her father of Fiorsen's reappearance. He received the news with a shrewd glance.

"Well, Gyp?"

"I told him."

Curiosity, disapproval, to which he was not entitled, admiration of her pluck, fears for the consequences, disturbance at knowing her at last launched into the deep waters of love—it was the least of these feelings that found expression.

"How did he take it?"

"Rushed away. I feel sure he won't divorce me."

"No, I don't suppose even he would have that impudence!" And Winton was silent. "Well," he said suddenly, "it's on the knees of the gods then. But be careful, Gyp."

About noon, Betty returned from the sea, with a solemn, dark-eyed, cooing little Gyp, brown as a roasted coffee-berry. When she had been given all that she could wisely eat after the journey, Gyp carried her off to her own room, cuddled her up in a shawl and lay down with her on the bed. A few sleepy cooes and strokings, and little Gyp left for the land of Nod. Her mother lay gazing at her black lashes with a kind of passion. She was not a great child-lover, but this child of hers, with her dark softness, plump delicacy, giving disposition, cooing voice, constant adjurations to "dear mum," was adorable, insidiously seductive. She had developed quickly, with the graceful roundness of a little

animal, the perfection of a flower. The Italian blood of her great-great-grandmother was prepotent in her as yet; and her hair, which had lost its baby darkness, was already curving round her neck and waving on her forehead. One of her tiny brown hands had escaped the shawl and grasped its edge with determined softness. Gyp gazed at the pinkish nails and their absurdly wee half-moons, at the sleeping tranquillity stirred by breathing no more than a rose-leaf on a windless day, and her lips grew fuller, trembled, reached toward the dark lashes, till she had to rein her neck back to stop her self-indulgence.

That evening, at dinner, Winton said calmly:

"I've been to see Fiorsen, and warned him off. Found him at that fellow Rosek's. And I met that girl, the dancer, coming out of the house as I was going in—made it plain I'd seen her, so I don't think he'll trouble you."

"How was she looking, Dad?"

Winton smiled. How to convey his impression of the figure he had seen coming down the steps—of those eyes growing round at sight of him, of that mouth opening?

"Much the same. Rather flabbergasted. A white hat—very smart. Attractive in her way, but common, of course. Those two were playing the piano and fiddle when I went up. They tried not to let me in. Queer place, that!"

Gyp could see it all so well. The black walls, silver statuettes, Rops drawings, dead rose-leaves and cigarettes—those two by the piano—her father so cool and dry!

"One can't stand on ceremony with fellows like that. I hadn't forgotten that Polish chap's behaviour to you, my dear."

Through Gyp passed a quiver of dread.

"I'm almost sorry you went, Dad. Did you say anything very——"

"No; I think I was quite polite. I won't swear I

didn't call one of them a ruffian. They said something about my presuming on being a cripple."

"Oh, darling!"

"That Polish chap——"

Again she felt that dread. Rosek's pale, suave face, with eyes behind which were such hidden things, and lips sweetish, restrained, sensual—he would never forgive! But Winton was smiling. He was pleased with an encounter which had relieved his feelings.

Gyp spent all that evening writing her first real love-letter. But when, next afternoon at six, in fulfilment of its wording, she came to Summerhay's little house, the blinds were down and it had a deserted look. He should have been at the window, waiting. Had he, then, not got her letter, not been home since yesterday? The chill fear which besets lovers' hearts at failure of a tryst smote her for the first time. In the three-cornered garden stood a decayed Eros with a broken bow—a sparrow on its greenish shoulder; sooty lilac-leaves round its head, and at its legs the old Scotch terrier sniffing. "Ossy!" The old dog came, wagging its tail feebly.

"Master! Where is master?"

Ossian poked his long nose into her calf. She passed from the deserted house with all manner of frightened thoughts. Where had he gone? Why had he not let her know? Her scepticism ran riot. What did she know of him, except that he said he loved her? The jealous feelings that had so besieged her at the bungalow when his letters ceased, came again with redoubled force. There must be some woman who had claim on him, some girl whom he admired. She was amazed by her capacity for jealousy. She had always thought she would be too proud to feel that sensation, so dark and wretched and undignified—so horribly real and clinging.

Winton had gone to his club, and she partook of a little trumped-up meal; then put on her things again and

slipped out. She went past St. James's Church into Piccadilly, to the farther, crowded side, and began to walk toward the park. To do a foolish thing was some relief, and she went along with a faint smile. Women of the town came rounding out of side streets, with their skilled, rapid-seeming slowness. And at the discomfited, half-hostile stares on their rouged and powdered faces, Gyp felt a wicked glee. She was disturbing, hurting them—and she wanted to hurt.

A man, in evening dress, with overcoat thrown open, ranged up beside her. She walked straight on, with her half-smile, knowing him puzzled and fearfully attracted. Then at the expression on her face, he wilted away, and again she felt that wicked glee.

She crossed out into the traffic, to the park side, and turned back toward St. James's, possessed now by a profound, black sadness. If only her lover were beside her among the lights and shadows of the trees, in the warm air! Why was he not among these passers-by? She could bring any casual man to her side by a smile, but could not conjure up the only one she wanted from this great desert of a town! At the corner of St. James's Street she stopped. That was his club. Perhaps he was there, playing cards or billiards, a few yards away, and yet as in another world. Presently he would come out, go to some music-hall, or stroll home thinking of her—perhaps not even thinking of her! And, close under the windows of the club, she hurried home.

Next morning brought a letter. Summerhay wrote from an inn on the river, asking her to come down by the eleven o'clock train. He would meet her at the station. He wanted to show her a house he had seen; they could have the afternoon on the river! She received this letter with an ecstasy she could not quite conceal. And Winton, who had watched her face, said:

"I think I shall go to Newmarket, Gyp. Home to-morrow evening."

In the train on the way down, she sat in a sort of

trance. If her lover had been there, he could not have seemed nearer.

She saw him as the train ran in; they met without a handclasp, without a word, just looking at each other.

A little victoria "dug up"—as Summerhay said—"horse, driver and all," carried them off, with hands clasped under cover of the rug.

The day was of early September when the sun is hot, yet not too hot, and its light falls silken on trees just losing the opulence of summer, on silvery-gold reaped fields, silvery-green uplands, golden mustard; when shots ring out in the distance, and, as one gazes, a leaf falls, without seeming reason. By a lane, past a clump of beeches, they reached a lonely house, of very old red brick, covered by Virginia creeper just turning; with an ingle-nook and low, broad chimneys. Before it was a walled, neglected lawn, with poplars and a large walnut-tree. The sunlight seemed to have collected in that garden, and there was a great humming of bees. Above the trees, the downs could be seen where racehorses, they said, were trained. Summerhay had the keys, and they went in. It was like a child's "pretending"—to imagine they were going to live there together, to sort out the rooms and consecrate each. She would not spoil it by argument or admission of the need for a decision. And when he asked:

"Well, darling, what do you think of it?" she only answered:

"Oh, lovely, in a way; but let's go back to the river and make the most of it."

They took boat at the inn where he was staying. To Summerhay, a rowing man at Oxford, the river was known from Lechlade to Richmond; but Gyp had never in her life been on it, and its placid magic almost overwhelmed her. On this glistening, windless day, to drift along past the bright, flat water-lily leaves over the greenish depths; to listen to the pigeons cooing, watch the dragon-flies flitting past, the fish leaping lazily, let-

ting her hand dabble in the water, cooling her sun-warmed cheek with it, gazing at her lover, was a voyage down the river of dreams, the fulfilment of felicity. Had she really had a life with another man only a year ago!

But when, in the last backwater, he tied the boat up and came to sit with her once more, it was already late, and the vague melancholy of the shadowy river came stealing into her. With a sinking at her heart, she heard him begin to plead.

"Gyp, we *must* go away together. We can never stand it apart, just snatching hours like this."

"Why not, darling? Hasn't this been perfect? What could we ever have more perfect? It's been paradise itself!"

"Yes; but to be thrown out every day! To be whole days and nights without you! Gyp, you must! Don't you love me enough?"

"Too much. It's tempting Providence to change. Let's go on as we are, Bryan."

"Why are you afraid?"

"Oh! Let it be like this. Don't let's change or risk anything."

"Is it people—society—you're afraid of? I thought *you* wouldn't care."

Gyp smiled.

"Society? No; I'm not afraid of that."

"What, then? Of me?"

"I don't know. Men soon get tired. I'm a doubter; I can't help it."

"As if anyone could tire of you! Are you afraid of yourself?"

Again Gyp smiled.

"Not of loving too little."

"How can one love too much?"

She drew his face down to her lips.

"No, Bryan; let's go on as we are. I'll make up to you when I'm with you. If you were to tire of me, I couldn't bear it."

For a long time more he pleaded—with anger, with kisses, with reasonings; but, to all, she opposed that same tender, half-mournful "No." It was dusk when they left the boat, and dew was falling. Just before they reached the station, she caught his hand to her breast.

"Darling, don't be angry with me! Perhaps I will —some day."

And, in the train, she tried to think herself once more in the boat, among the shadows and the whispering reeds and all the quiet wonder of the river.

XII

She let herself in stealthily, and went up at once to her room. She was taking off her blouse when Betty entered, with tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Betty! What is it?"

"Oh, my dear, where *have* you been? They've stolen her! That wicked man—your husband—he took her right out of her pram—and went off with her in a great car—he and that other one! I've been half out of my mind!" Gyp stared aghast. "The major away and all—what was I to do? I'd just turned round to shut the gate of the square gardens, and I never saw him till he'd put his great long arm over the pram and snatched her out." And, sitting on the bed, she gave way utterly.

Gyp stood motionless, in terror. That vengeful wretch, Rosek!

"Oh, Betty, she must be crying!"

A fresh outburst of moans was the only answer. And she remembered suddenly what the lawyer had said a year ago—in law, Fiorsen could claim her child. She could have got her back, then, by bringing a horrible case against him, but now—perhaps she could not. Was it her return to Fiorsen that they aimed at—or the giving up of her lover? She went over to her mirror, saying:

"We'll go at once, Betty, and get her back somehow. Wash your face."

While she made ready, she fought down those two horrible fears—of losing her child, of losing her lover; the less she feared, the better she could act, the more subtly, swiftly. Somewhere she had a little stiletto, given her a long time ago. She hunted it out, slipped off its red-leather sheath, and, stabbing the point into a tiny cork, slipped it beneath her blouse. If they could steal her baby they were capable of anything. She wrote a note to her father, telling him what had happened, and

where she had gone. Then, in a taxi, they set forth. Cold water and the calmness of her mistress had removed from Betty the main traces of emotion; but she clasped Gyp's hand, and gave vent to heavy sighs.

Gyp would not think. If she thought of her little one crying, she knew she would cry too. But her hatred for those who had dealt this cowardly blow grew within her. She took a resolution and said quietly:

"Mr. Summerhay, Betty. That's why they've stolen our darling. I suppose you know he and I care for each other. They've stolen her so as to make me do anything they like."

A wheeze answered her.

That moon-face seemed all in conflict between morality and belief in Gyp, fears for her and wishes for her happiness, the loyal retainer and the old nurse.

"Oh dear! He's a nice gentleman, too! I never did hold you was rightly married to that foreigner in that horrible registry place—no music, no flowers, no blessin' asked, nor nothing. I cried me eyes out at the time."

"No; Betty, I only *thought* I was in love." A convulsive squeeze and creaking heralded a fresh outburst. "Don't cry; we're just there. Think of our darling!"

The cab stopped. Feeling for her little weapon, she got out, and with her hand slipped firmly under Betty's arm, led the way upstairs, haunted by memories of Daphne Wing and Rosek, of that large woman—what was her name?—of other faces and unholy hours; memories of late returnings down these wide stairs out to their cab, of Fiorsen beside her in the darkness, his face moody in the corner or pressed close to hers. Once they had walked a long way homeward in the dawn, Rosek with them. Dim, unreal memories! Grasping Betty's arm more firmly, she rang the bell.

"Is Mr. Fiorsen in, Ford?"

"No, ma'am; Mr. Fiorsen and Count Rosek went into the country this afternoon. I haven't their address

at present." She must have turned white, for she heard the man say: "Anything I can get you, ma'am?"

"When did they start, please?"

"One o'clock, ma'am—by car. Count Rosek was driving. I should say they won't be away long—they just had their bags with them. I could let you know the moment they return, ma'am, if you'll kindly leave me your address."

Giving her card and murmuring:

"Thank you, Ford; thank you very much," she grasped Betty's arm again and leaned heavily on her going down the stairs.

It was real, black fear now. To lose helpless things—children—dogs—and know for certain that one cannot get to them, no matter what they may be suffering! To be pinned down to ignorance and have in her ears the crying of her child—this horror Gyp suffered now. And nothing to be done! Nothing but to go to bed and wait! Mercifully—thanks to her long day in the open—she fell at last into a dreamless sleep. When she was called, there was a letter from Fiorsen on the tray with her tea.

"GYP:

"I am not a baby-stealer like your father. The law gives me the right to my own child. But swear to give up your lover, and the baby shall come back to you at once. If you do not give him up, I will take her away out of England. Send me an answer to this post-office, and do not let your father try any tricks upon me.

"GUSTAV FIORSEN."

Beneath was written the address of a West End post-office.

After a moment of mental anguish, her wits and wariness came back. Had he been drinking when he wrote that letter? She could fancy she smelled brandy, but it was easy to fancy what one wanted to. She read it through again. If he had composed the wording him-

self, he would never have resisted a gibe at the law, or a gibe at himself for thus safeguarding her virtue. It was Rosek's dictation. Her anger flamed up anew. Why need she herself be scrupulous? She sprang out of bed and wrote:

"How *could* you do such a brutal thing? At all events, let the darling have her nurse. It's not like you to let a little child suffer. Betty will be ready to come the minute you send for her. As for myself, you must give me time to decide. I will let you know within two days.

"GYP."

When she had sent this off, and a telegram to her father at Newmarket, she read Fiorsen's letter once more, and was more than ever certain it was Rosek's wording. And, suddenly, she thought of Daphne Wing. Through her there might be a chance. She seemed to see again the girl lying white and void of hope, robbed by death of her own babe. Surely it was worth trying.

An hour later, her cab stopped before the Wagges' door. She was ringing the bell when a voice from behind her said:

"Allow me; I have a key. Ow, it's you!" Mr. Wagge, in professional habiliments, was standing there. "Come in; come in," he said. "I was wondering whether perhaps we shouldn't be seeing you after what's transpired."

Hanging up his tall black hat, craped nearly to the crown, he said huskily:

"I *did* think we'd seen the last of that," and opened the dining-room door.

In that too well remembered room the table was laid with a stained white cloth and a bottle of Worcester sauce. The little blue bowl was gone; nothing now marred the harmony of red and green. Gyp said quickly:

"Doesn't Daph—Daisy live at home, then, now?"

On Mr. Wagge's face suspicion, relief, and craftiness were blended with that furtive admiration which Gyp seemed always to excite in him.

"Do I understand that you—er——"

"I came to ask if Daisy would do something for me."

Mr. Wagge blew his nose.

"You didn't know——?"

"Yes; I dare say she sees my husband; but I don't mind—he's nothing to me now."

Mr. Wagge's face became further complicated by the expression of a husband.

"Well, it's not to be wondered at, perhaps, in the circumstances. I'm sure I always thought——"

Gyp interrupted swiftly.

"Please, Mr. Wagge—please! Will you give me Daisy's address?"

Mr. Wagge remained a moment in deep thought, then said, in a gruff, jerky voice:

"Seventy-three Comrade Street, So'o. Up to seeing him there on Tuesday, I must say I cherished every hope. Now I'm only sorry I didn't strike him—he was too quick for me——" He had raised one of his gloved hands and was sawing it up and down. "It's her blasted independence—I beg pardon—but who wouldn't?" he ended suddenly.

Gyp passed him.

"Who wouldn't?" she heard his voice behind her. "I did think she'd have run straight this time——" And while she was fumbling at the outer door, his pudgy face, with its round grey beard, protruded over her shoulder. "If you're going to see her, I hope you'll——"

In her cab Gyp shivered. Once she had lunched with her father at a restaurant in the Strand. It had been full of Mr. Wagges.

XIII

Seventy-three Comrade Street, Soho, was difficult to find; but, with the aid of a milk-boy, Gyp discovered the right door. A plump white hand and wrist emerging took the can, and Daphne Wing's voice said:

"Oh, where's the cream?"

"Ain't got none."

"Oh! I told you always—two pennyworth at twelve o'clock."

"Two penn'orth." The boy's eyes goggled.

"Didn't you want to speak to her, miss?" He beat the closing door. "Lidy wants to speak to you! Good-mornin', miss."

The figure of Daphne Wing in a blue kimono was revealed. Her eyes peered round at Gyp.

"Oh!" she said.

"May I come in?"

"Oh, yes! Oh, do! I've been practising. Oh, I am glad to see you!"

In the middle of the studio, a little table was laid for two. Daphne Wing went up to it, holding in one hand the milk-can and in the other a short knife, with which she had evidently been opening oysters. She turned round to Gyp. Her face was deep pink, and so was her neck, which ran V-shaped down into the folds of her kimono. Her eyes, round as saucers, met Gyp's.

"Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen, I am glad! I really am. I wanted you so much to see my room—do you like it? How *did* you know where I was?" She looked down and added: "I think I'd better tell you. Mr. Fiorsen came here, and, since then, I've seen him at Count Rosek's—and—and——"

"Yes; but don't trouble to tell me, please."

Daphne Wing hurried on.

"Of course, I'm quite mistress of myself now." Then, all at once, the uneasy woman-of-the-world mask

dropped from her face, and she seized Gyp's hand. "Oh, Mrs. Fiorsen, I shall never be like you!"

"I hope not." How could she ask this girl anything? She choked back that feeling, and said stonily: "Do you remember my baby? No, of course; you never saw her. *He* and Count Rosek have just taken her away from me."

Daphne Wing convulsively squeezed the hand.

"Oh, what a wicked thing! When?"

"Yesterday afternoon."

"Oh, I *am* glad I haven't seen him since! Oh, I *do* think that was wicked! Aren't you dreadfully distressed?" The least of smiles played on Gyp's mouth. Daphne Wing burst forth: "D'you know—I think—I think your self-control is something awful. It frightens me. If my baby had lived and been stolen like that, I should have been half dead by now."

Gyp answered stonily:

"Yes; I want her back, and I wondered——"

Daphne Wing clasped her hands.

"Oh, I expect I can make him——" She stopped, confused, then added hastily: "Are you sure you don't mind?"

"I shouldn't mind if he had fifty loves. Perhaps he has."

Daphne Wing's teeth came down rather viciously on her lower lip.

"I mean him to do what *I* want now, not what he wants me. That's the only way when you love. Oh, don't smile like that, please; you do make me feel so—uncertain."

"When are you going to see him next?"

Daphne Wing grew very pink.

"He might be coming in to lunch. It's not as if he were a stranger, is it?" Casting up her eyes a little, she added: "He won't even let me speak your name; it makes him mad. That's why I'm sure he still loves you; only, his love is so funny." And, seizing Gyp's

hand: "I shall never forget how good you were to me. I do hope you—you love somebody else." Gyp pressed those damp, clinging fingers, and Miss Wing hurried on: "I'm sure your baby's a darling. How you must be suffering! You look quite pale. But it isn't any good suffering. I learned that."

Gyp bent forward and put her lips to the girl's forehead.

"Good-bye. My baby would thank you if she knew."

And she turned to go. She heard a sob. But before she could speak, Daphne Wing struck herself on the throat, and said, in a strangled voice:

"Tha—that's idiotic! I—I haven't cried since—since, you know. I—I'm perfect mistress of myself; only, I—only—I suppose you reminded me—I *never* cry!"

Those words and the sound of a hiccough accompanied Gyp down the alley to her cab.

Back in Bury Street, she found Betty sitting in the hall with her bonnet on. She had not been sent for, nor had any reply come from Newmarket. Gyp could not eat, could settle to nothing. She went up to her bedroom to get away from the servants' eyes. Every other minute she stopped to listen to sounds that meant nothing, went a hundred times to the window. Betty was in the nursery opposite; Gyp could hear her moving about among her household gods. Presently those sounds ceased, and, peering into the room, she saw the stout woman sitting on a trunk, with her back turned, uttering heavy sighs. Gyp stole back into her own room, trembling. If—if her baby really could not be recovered except by that sacrifice! If that cruel letter were the last word, and she forced to decide between them! Which would she give up? Which follow—her lover or her child?

She went to the window for air—the pain about her heart was dreadful. She felt dizzy from the violence

of a struggle that refused coherent thought or feeling, was just a dumb pull of instincts, both so strong—how terribly strong she had not till then realised.

Her eyes fell on the picture that reminded her of Bryan; it seemed now to have no resemblance—none. He was much too real, and loved, and wanted. Less than twenty-four hours ago, she had turned a deaf ear to his pleading that she should go to him for ever. How funny! She would rush to him now—go when and where he liked! If only she were back in his arms! Never could she give him up! But then in her ears sounded the cooing words, "Dear mum!" Her baby—that tiny thing—how could she give her up, never again hold close and kiss that round, perfect little body, that grave little dark-eyed face?

The roar of London came in through the open window. So much life, so many people—and not a soul could help! She left the window and went to the cottage-piano she had there, out of Winton's way. And she sat with arms folded, looking at the keys. The song that girl had sung at Fiorsen's concert—song of the broken heart—came back to her.

No, no; she couldn't—couldn't! It was to her lover she would cling. And tears ran down her cheeks.

A cab had stopped below, but not till Betty came rushing in did she look up.

XIV

When, trembling violently, she entered the dining-room, Fiorsen was standing by the sideboard, holding the child.

He came straight up and put her into Gyp's arms.

"Take her," he said, "and do what you will. Be happy."

Hugging her baby, Gyp answered nothing. She could not have spoken a word to save her life; grateful, bewildered, abashed, yet instinctively aware of something evanescent and unreal in his altruism. Daphne Wing! What bargain did this represent?

Fiorsen must have felt the chill of this instinctive vision, for he cried out:

"You never believed in me; you never thought me capable of good!"

Gyp bent to hide the quivering of her lips.

"I am sorry—very sorry."

Fiorsen looked into her face.

"By God, I am afraid I shall never forget you—never!"

Tears had come into his eyes, and Gyp watched them, moved, troubled, but still deeply mistrustful.

He brushed his hand across his face. 'He means me to see them!' she thought.

Fiorsen saw, and muttering suddenly:

"Good-bye, Gyp! I am *not* all bad!" was gone.

That passionate "I am *not!*" saved Gyp from breakdown. Even at his highest pitch of abnegation, he could not forget himself.

Overwhelming relief is slowly realised; but presently it seemed as if she must cry out, and tell the whole world of her intoxicating happiness. And the moment little Gyp was in Betty's arms, she sat down and wrote to Summerhay:

"Darling,

"I've had a fearful time. My baby was stolen by him while I was with you. He wrote saying he would give her back if I gave you up. But I found I

couldn't give you up, not even for my baby. And then, a few minutes ago, he brought her—none the worse. To-morrow we shall all go down to Mildenham; but very soon, if you still want me, I'll come with you wherever you like. My father and Betty will take care of my treasure till we come back; and then, perhaps, the old red house we saw—after all. Only—now is the time for you to draw back. Don't let any foolish pity—or honour—weigh with you; be utterly sure, I beseech you. I can just bear it now if it's for your good. The worst misery of all would be to make you unhappy. Oh, make sure—make sure! I shall understand. I mean this with every bit of me. And now, good-night, and perhaps—good-bye.

"Your

"GYP."

She read it over. Did she really mean that she could bear it if he drew back—if, looking into the far future, he decided that she was not worth the candle?

She closed and sealed the letter. Why had one a heart so much too soft?

Ten days later, at Mildenham station, holding her father's hand, Gyp could scarcely see him for the mist before her eyes.

"Good-bye, my love! Take care of yourself; wire from London, and again from Paris. He has luck; I had none."

The mist became tears, rolled down, fell on his glove.

"Not too long out there, Gyp!"

She pressed her wet cheek to his. The train moved, but, so long as she could see, she watched him waving his grey hat; then sat down, blinded with tears behind her veil. She had not cried when she left him the day of her fatal marriage; she cried now that she was leaving him to go to happiness.

But her heart had grown since then.

PART IV

I

Little Gyp, aged nearly four and a half that first of May, stood at the edge of the tulip border, bowing to two hen turkeys who were poking their heads among the flowers. She was very like her mother, with the same oval-shaped face, dark arched brows, large and clear brown eyes; but she had the modern child's open-air look; her hair, curling over at the ends, was not allowed to be long, and her polished brown legs were bare to the knees.

"Turkeys! You aren't good, are you? Come *on!*" And, stretching out her hands with the palms held up, she backed away from the tulip bed. The turkeys, trailing delicately their long-toed feet and uttering liquid interrogations, moved after her in hopes of what she was not holding in her little brown hands. The slanting sun painted that small procession—the deep blue frock of little Gyp, the glint of gold in the chestnut of her hair; the daisy-starred grass; the dark birds with translucent red dewlaps and checkered tails; the tulips, puce, red and yellow. Having lured them to the open gate, little Gyp raised herself, and said:

"Aren't you duffies, dears? Shoo!" And on the tails of the turkeys she shut the gate. Then she went to where, under the walnut-tree—the one large tree of that walled garden—a very old Scotch terrier was lying. Sitting down beside him, she began stroking his white muzzle, saying:

"Ossy, Ossy, do you love me?"

Then, seeing her mother in the porch, she jumped up, and crying out: "Ossy—Ossy! Walk!" rushed to Gyp and embraced her legs, while the old Scotch terrier slowly followed.

Nearly three years had changed Gyp a little. Her face was softer, rather more grave, her form a little fuller, her hair darker, and, instead of waving in wings, smoothly gathered round in a lustrous helmet, better revealing the shape of her head.

"Darling, go and ask Pettance to put a fresh piece of sulphur in Ossy's water-bowl, and to cut up his meat finer. You can give Hotspur and Brownie two lumps of sugar each; and then we'll go out." Going on her knees, she parted the old dog's hair, and examined his eczema, thinking: 'Oh, ducky, you're not smelling your best! Yes; only—not my face!'

A telegraph-boy was coming from the gate. She opened the missive with the faint tremor she always felt when Summerhay was not with her.

"Detained; shall be down by last train; need not come up to-morrow.—BRYAN."

When the boy was gone, she stooped and stroked the old dog's head.

"Master home all day to-morrow, Ossy—master home!"

A voice from the path said, "Beautiful evenin', ma'am."

The "old scoundrel," Pettance, stiffer in the ankle-joints, with more lines in his gargoyle's face, fewer stumps in his gargoyle's mouth, more film over his dark, burning little eyes, was standing before her, and, behind him, little Gyp, one foot rather before the other, as Gyp had been wont to stand, waited gravely.

"Oh, Pettance, Mr. Summerhay will be at home all to-morrow, and we'll go a long ride; and when you exercise, will you call at the inn, in case I don't go that way, and tell Major Winton I expect him to dinner to-night?"

"Yes, ma'am; and I've seen the pony for little Miss Gyp this morning, ma'am. It's a mouse pony, five year old, sound, good temper, pretty little paces. I says to the man: 'Don't you come it over me,' I says; 'I was born on an 'orse. Talk of twenty pound for that pony! Ten, and lucky to get it!' 'Well,' he says, 'Pettance, it's no good to talk round an' round with you. Fifteen!' he says. 'I'll throw you one in,' I says, 'Eleven!

Take it or leave it.' 'Ah!' he says, 'Pettance, *you* know 'ow to buy an 'orse. All right,' he says; 'twelve!' She's worth all of fifteen, ma'am, and the major's passed her. So if you likes to have 'er, there she is!"

Gyp looked at her little daughter, who had given one excited hop, but now stood still, her eyes flying up at her mother and her lips parted; and she thought: 'The darling! She never begs for anything!'

"Very well, Pettance; buy her."

"Yes, ma'am—very good, ma'am. Beautiful evenin', ma'am." And, withdrawing at his gait of one whose feet are at permanent right angles to the legs, he mused: 'And that'll be two in my pocket.'

Ten minutes later Gyp, with her child and dog, set out for their evening walk. They went, not as usual, up to the downs, but towards the river, making for what they called "the wild"—two sedgy meadows, hedged by banks on which grew oaks and ashes. An old stone linhay, covered to its broken thatch by a huge ivy bush, stood at the angle where the meadows met. The spot, strange in that kempt countryside of cornfields, grass, and beech-clumps, was favoured by beasts and birds, and little Gyp had recently seen two baby hares. From an oak-tree, where the crinkled leaves were not yet large enough to hide him, a cuckoo was calling, and they stopped to look till he flew off. The singing and serenity, the green and golden oaks and ashes, the flowers—marsh-orchis, ladies' smocks, and cuckoo-buds, starring the rushy grass—all brought to Gyp that feeling of the uncapturable spirit which lies behind the forms of nature, the shadowy, hovering smile of life ever vanishing and springing again out of death. Close to the linhay a bird came flying in wide circles, uttering shrill cries. It had a long beak, long, pointed wings, and seemed distressed. Little Gyp squeezed her mother's hand.

"Isn't it a poor bird, Mum?"

"It's a curlew. Perhaps its mate is hurt."

"What is its mate?"

"The bird it lives with."

"It's afraid of us."

"Shall we go and see if we can find out what's the matter?"

The curlew continued to circle, always uttering those shrill cries. Little Gyp said:

"Mum, could we speak to it? Because we're not going to hurt nothing, are we?"

"Of course not, darling! But I'm afraid the poor bird's too wild. Try, if you like."

Little Gyp's piping joined the curlew's cries in the quiet of the evening.

"Oh, look; its dipping close to the ground, over there—it's got a nest! We won't go near, will we?"

Little Gyp echoed in a hushed voice:

"It's got a nest."

They stole back out of the gate close to the linhay, the curlew still flighting and crying behind them.

"Aren't we glad the mate isn't hurt, Mum?"

Gyp answered with a shiver:

"Yes, darling, fearfully glad. Shall we go down and ask Grandy to come up to dinner?"

Little Gyp hopped. And they went towards the river.

At the river inn Winton had for two years had rooms. He had refused to make his home with Gyp, desiring to be on hand only when she wanted him. He led a simple life in those simple quarters, riding with her when Summerhay was in town, laying plans for the defence of her position, visiting the cottagers, devoting himself to the whims of little Gyp. This moment, when his grandchild was to begin to ride, was in a manner sacred to one for whom life had scant meaning apart from horses. Looking at them, hand in hand, Gyp thought: 'Dad loves her as much as he loves me now.'

Lonely dinner at the inn was an affliction studiously concealed; he accepted their invitation without alacrity.

The Red House contained nothing that had been in Gyp's married home except the piano. It had white

walls, furniture of old oak, and reproductions of her favourite pictures. Winton got on well enough with Summerhay, but enjoyed himself much more when alone with his daughter. This evening he was especially glad to have her to himself; she had seemed of late rather grave and absent-minded.

"I wish you saw more people," he said.

"Oh no, Dad."

Watching her smile, he thought: 'That's not "sour grapes"—— What is the trouble, then?'

"I suppose you've not heard anything of Fiorsen lately?"

"Not a word. But he's playing again in London this season, I see."

"Ah! that'll cheer them." It was not that, then. But there was something!

"I hear that Bryan's going ahead. I met a man in town last week who spoke of him as the most promising junior at the bar."

"Yes; he's doing awfully well." A faint sigh caught his ears. "Would you say he's changed much since you knew him, Dad?"

"A little less jokey."

"Yes; he's lost his laugh."

Evenly and softly said, it affected Winton.

"Can't expect him to keep that," he answered, "turning people inside out, day after day—and most of them rotten."

Strolling back in the moonlight, he wished he had said directly: 'Are you worrying about him—or have people been making themselves unpleasant?'

In these last three years he had become unconsciously inimical to his own class, more than ever friendly to the poor—visiting the labourers, small farmers, small tradesmen, doing them little turns, giving their children sixpences. That they could not afford to put on airs of virtue escaped him; he perceived only that they were respectful and friendly to Gyp. His heart warmed to

them in proportion as he grew exasperated with the two or three landed families, and that *parvenu* lot in the riverside villas.

When he first came down, the chief landowner—a man he had known for years—had invited him to lunch. He had accepted with the deliberate intention of finding out where he was, and had taken the first natural opportunity of mentioning his daughter. She was, he said, devoted to her flowers; the Red House had quite a good garden. His friend's wife had answered with a nervous smile: "Oh! yes; of course—yes." And silence had fallen. Since then, Winton had saluted his friend and his friend's wife with frigid politeness. He had not gone there fishing for Gyp to be called on, but to show these people that his daughter could not be slighted with impunity. And yet, man of the world to his finger-tips, he knew perfectly well that, living with a man to whom she was not married, she could not be recognised by people with any pretensions to goodness; Gyp was beyond even the debatable ground on which stood those who have been divorced and are married again. But even a man of the world is not proof against the warping of devotion, and Winton was ready to charge any windmill at any moment on her behalf.

Exhaling the last puffs of his good-night cigarette, he thought: 'What wouldn't I give for the old days, and a chance to wing some of these moral upstarts!'

II

The last train was not due till eleven-thirty, and Gyp went to Summerhay's study, over which was their bedroom. She would have been horrified if she had known of her father's sentiments. She had certainly no wish to see more people. The conditions of her life often seemed to her ideal. She was free of people she did not care about, and of all empty social functions. Everything she had now was real—love, and nature, riding, music, animals, and poor people. What else was worth having? It often seemed to her that books and plays about unhappy women in her position were false. If one loved, what could one want better? Such women could have no pride; or else could not really love! She had recently been reading "Anna Karenina," and had often said to herself: "There's something not true about it—as if Tolstoy wanted to make us believe that Anna was secretly feeling remorse. If one loves, one doesn't feel remorse."

She derived positive joy from the feeling that her love imposed isolation; she liked to be apart—for him. Besides, by her birth she was outside the fold of society, her love beyond the love of those within it—as her father's love had been before her. And her pride greater than theirs, too. How could women mope and moan because they were cast out, and try to scratch their way back where they were not welcome? Even if Fiorsen died, would she marry her lover? What difference would it make? She could not love him more. For herself, she would rather go on as she was. But for him, she was not certain. He was not bound now, could leave her when he tired! And yet—did he not perhaps feel himself more bound than if they were married—unfairly bound? It was this thought—this shadow of a thought—which had given her, of late, the extra gravity noticed by her father.

In that unlighted room with the moonbeams drifting

in, she sat down at Summerhay's bureau, where he often worked too late at his cases, depriving her of himself. Resting her bare elbows on the wood, she gazed out into the moonlight, drifting on a stream of memories beginning from the year when he came into her life.

So many memories, nearly all happy! Adroit of the jeweller who put the human soul together to give it power to forget the dark and remember sunshine! The year and a half of her life with Fiorsen, the empty months that followed it were as mist dispersed by the radiance of the last three years. The only cloud had been the doubt whether Summerhay really loved her as much as she loved him. Her mind was ever at stretch on that point, comparing past days and nights with the days and nights of the present. Her prevision that, when she loved, it would be desperately, had been fulfilled. He had become her life. And since her besetting strength and weakness alike was pride—no wonder that she doubted.

For their Odyssey they had gone to Spain—that brown un-European land of "lyrio" flowers, and cries of "Agua!" in the streets, where the men seem cleft to the waist when astride of horses, under their wide black hats, and black-clothed women with wonderful eyes still look as if they missed Eastern veils. They had spent a month of gaiety and glamour, last days of September, early days of October, a revel of enchanted wanderings in the streets of Seville, of embraces and laughter, of strange scents, strange sounds, of orange light and velvety shadows, and all the warmth and deep gravity of Spain. The Alcazar, the cigarette-girls, the Gipsy dancers of Triana, the old brown ruins to which they rode, the streets, and the square with its grave talkers sitting on benches in the sun, the water-sellers and the melons; the mules, and the dark ragged man out of a dream, picking up the ends of cigarettes, the wine of Malaga, the grapes of Alicante! They had come back across the burnt uplands of Castile to Madrid and Goya

and Velasquez, till it was time for Paris, before the law-term began. There, in a queer little French hotel they had spent a week with many pleasant memories, and one disconcerting. On the last night they were having supper after the theatre, when in a mirror she saw three people come in and take seats at a table behind—Fiorsen, Rosek, and Daphne Wing! While they were ordering, she was safe, for Rosek was a *gourmet*, and the girl would certainly be hungry; but, after that, nothing could save her being seen! Should she pretend to feel faint and slip out? Or let Bryan know? Or sit there talking, eating, as if nothing were behind her?

Her face in the mirror had a flush, her eyes were bright. They would see that she was happy in her love. Her foot sought Summerhay's beneath the table. Splendidly brown and fit he looked, compared with those pale, towny creatures! And he was gazing at her as though just discovering her beauty. How could she ever have endured that man with his little beard, his white face, those eyes! Then, in the mirror, she saw Rosek's dark-circled eyes betray recognition by a sudden gleam, saw his lips compressed, and a faint red come up in his cheeks. What would he do? The girl's back was turned—she was eating. And Fiorsen was staring straight before him in that moody way she knew so well. All depended on that deadly little man, who had once kissed her throat. She felt quite sick. If her lover knew that within five yards of him were those two men! Rosek had seen that she was conscious. She saw him whisper to the girl. Daphne Wing turned to look, her mouth opened in a smothered "Oh!" and Gyp saw her uneasy glance at Fiorsen. Surely she would want to get away before he saw! Yes; very soon she rose. What little airs—quite mistress of the situation! The wrap must be placed exactly on her shoulders; and how she walked, with one startled look back from the door. Gone! Gyp said:

"Let's go, darling."

She felt as if they had both escaped a deadly peril—not from anything those two could do to him or her, but from the ache and jealousy which the sight of that man would have brought him.

All through the first weeks of life together, there was a kind of wise watchfulness in Gyp. He was only a boy in knowledge, though his character was so much more decided, active, and insistent than her own; it lay with her to shape the course, avoid the shallows and sunken rocks. While the house under the Berkshire downs was being got ready, they lived at a London hotel. She let him tell no one of their life together. She wanted to be firmly settled in first, with little Gyp and Betty and the horses, as much like respectable married life as possible. But in the first week after their return a card was brought up to her: "Lady Summerhay." When the page-boy was gone, she looked at herself doubtfully in the glass. She seemed to know exactly what that tall woman whom she had seen on the platform would think of her—soft, not capable, not right for him!—not even if legally his wife. And touching her hair, laying a dab of scent on her eyebrows, she went downstairs fluttering, outwardly calm.

In the low-roofed lounge, "entirely renovated," her visitor was rapidly turning the pages of a magazine, as people will at a dentist's when their minds are set on a coming operation. And she thought: 'I believe she's more frightened than I am!'

Lady Summerhay held out a gloved hand.

"How do you do? I hope you'll forgive my coming."

"It was very good of you. I'm sorry Bryan isn't in. Will you have some tea?"

"I've had tea; but do let's sit down. How do you find the hotel?"

"Very nice."

On a velvet lounge that had survived renovation, they sat side by side, screwed round towards each other.

"Bryan's told me what a pleasant time you had

abroad. He's looking very well, I think. I'm devoted to him, you know."

Gyp answered softly:

"Yes, you must be." Her heart felt suddenly hard as flint.

Lady Summerhay gave her a quick look.

"I—I hope you won't mind my being frank—I've been so worried. It's an unhappy position, isn't it. If there's anything I can do to help, I should be so glad—it must be horrid for you."

Gyp said very quietly:

"Oh! no. I couldn't be happier."

Lady Summerhay was looking at her fixedly.

"One doesn't realise these things at first—neither of you will, till you see how dreadfully society can cold-shoulder."

Gyp smiled.

"One can only be cold-shouldered if one puts oneself in the way of it. I should never wish to see anyone who couldn't take me just for what I am. And I don't really see what difference it will make to Bryan; most men of his age have someone, somewhere." She hated this society woman, who—disguise it as she would—was at heart her enemy, regarded her as an enslaver, a despoiler of her son's worldly chances, a Delilah dragging him down. And still more quietly she said: "He need tell no one of my existence; and you can be quite sure that if ever he feels he's had enough of me, he'll never be troubled by the sight of me again."

She got up. Lady Summerhay also rose.

"I hope you don't think—I really am only too anxious to——"

"I think it's better to be frank. You will never like me, or forgive me for ensnaring Bryan. And so it had better be, please, as if I were his common mistress. That will be perfectly all right for both of us. It was very good of you to come, though. Thank you—and good-bye."

Lady Summerhay literally faltered away among the little tables and elaborate chairs, till her tall figure had disappeared behind a column. Gyp sat down again on the lounge, pressing her hands to her burning ears. The strength of the pride-demon within her; at the moment, it was almost stronger than her love! She was still sitting there when the page-boy brought her another visitor—Winton, elated at sight of her after this long absence. Having given her the news of Mildenham and little Gyp, he had looked at her steadily, and said:

"The coast 'll be clear for you both down there, and at Bury Street, whenever you like to come. I shall regard this as your real marriage, Gyp. I shall have the servants in and make that plain."

A row as at family prayers—and Dad standing very straight: 'You will be so good in future as to remember——' 'I shall be obliged if you will,' and so on; Betty's round face pouting at being brought in with all the others; Markey's soft, inscrutable; Mrs. Markey's demure and goggling; the maids' rabbit-faces; old Pettance's carved grin: "Ho! Mr. Bryn Summer'ay; he bought her 'orse, and so she's gone to 'im!" And she said:

"Darling, I don't know! It's awfully sweet of you. We'll see later."

Winton patted her hand. "We must stand up to them, you know, Gyp."

Gyp laughed.

That same night, across the strip of blackness between their beds, she said:

"Bryan, promise me something!"

"It depends. I know you too well."

"No; it's quite reasonable, and possible. Promise!"

"All right; if it is."

"I want you to let *me* take the lease of the Red House—let it be mine, the whole thing—let me pay for everything there."

"What's the point?"

"Only that I shall have a proper home of my own. I can't explain, but your mother's coming to-day made me feel I must."

"My child, how could I possibly live on *you* there? It's absurd!"

"You can pay for everything else; London—travelling—clothes, if you like. We can make it square. It's not the money, of course. I only want to feel that if, at any moment, you don't need me any more, you can simply stop coming."

"That's brutal, Gyp."

"No; so many women lose men because they claim things of them. I don't want to lose you that way—that's all."

"That's silly, darling!"

"It's not. Men—and women, too—tug at chains. And when there is no chain——"

"Well then; let me take the house, and you can go away when you're tired of me." His voice sounded smothered, resentful; she could hear him turning and turning, as if angry with his pillows.

"No; I can't explain. But I really mean it."

"We're just beginning life together, and you talk as if you want to split it up. It hurts, Gyp, and that's all about it."

A dead silence followed, both lying quiet in the darkness, trying to get the better of each other by sheer listening. An hour passed before he sighed, and, feeling his lips on hers, she knew that she had won.

III

In the study the moonlight had reached her face; and still more memories came—of first days in this old house together.

Summerhay had damaged himself out hunting that first winter. The memory of nursing him was strangely pleasant, now that it was two years old. For convalescence they had gone to the Pyrenees—Argelès in March, all almond-blossom against the blue—a wonderful fortnight. In London on the way back they had their first awkward encounter, coming out of a theatre one evening. A woman's voice: "Why, Bryan! What ages!" His answer defensively drawled:

"Hallo! Diana!"

"Where are you nowadays? Why don't you come and see us?"

"Down in the country. I will, some time. Good-bye."

A tall girl—red-haired, with a wonderful white skin, and brown—yes, brown eyes; Gyp could see those eyes sweeping her up and down with a sort of burning-live curiosity. Then his hand was thrust under her arm.

"Come on, let's walk and get a cab."

Clear of the crowd, she pressed his hand, and said:

"Who was it?"

"A second cousin. Diana Leyton."

"Do you know her very well?"

"Oh yes—used to."

"And do you like her very much?"

"Rather!"

He looked round into her face, laughter bubbling behind his gravity. But to this day that tall girl with burning-white skin, burning-brown eyes, burning-red hair, was not quite a pleasant memory. After that night they did not hide their union, going wherever they wished, whether likely to meet people or not. Nothing was so easily ignored as Society when the heart was set on other things. And they were seldom in London.

But she never lost the feeling that the ideal for her was not ideal for him. He ought to go into the world and meet people; ought not to be cut off from social pleasures and duties, and then some day feel that he owed his starvation to her. To go up to London every day was too tiring, and she persuaded him to take a set of chambers in the Temple, and sleep there three nights a week. In spite of all his entreaties, she never went to those chambers, staying always at Bury Street when she came up. She would not risk making him feel that she was hanging round his neck. She wanted to keep herself so little a matter of course that he would hanker after her when he was away. And she never asked where he went or whom he saw. But, sometimes, she wondered whether he could still love her as he used to. Love such as hers—passionate, adoring, protective, longing to sacrifice itself, to give all that it had to him, yet secretly demanding all his love in return—for how could a proud woman love one who did not love her?—such love was always longing for a union more complete than was possible in a world where all things move and change. But against its grip she never dreamed of fighting. She made no reservations; all her eggs were in one basket, as her father's had been before her.

The moonlight shone full on the old bureau and a vase of tulips, giving the flowers colour that was not colour, as if they came from a world beyond human consciousness. It glinted on a bronze of old Voltaire, till he seemed to be smiling from the hollows of his eyes. Gyp turned the bust a little, to catch the light on its far cheek; a letter was disclosed between it and the oak. She drew it out.

"DEAR BRYAN,

"But *I* say—you *are* wasting yourself——"

She pushed it back under the bust, and got up, tempted to read the rest of that letter and see from whom it came.

No! One did not read letters. But the full import of those few words struck into her: "Dear Bryan. But *I* say—you *are* wasting yourself." A woman's hand; but not his mother's, nor his sisters'—she knew their writings. Who had dared to say he was wasting himself? A letter in a chain of letters! An intimate correspondent, whose name she did not know, because—he had not told her! Wasting himself—on what?—on his life with her down here? Was he? She began searching her memory. Last Christmas vacation—that clear, cold, wonderful fortnight in Florence, he had been full of fun. May now! No memory since—of his old infectious gaiety! "But *I* say—you *are* wasting yourself." Hatred flared up in her against the unknown woman who had said that thing—her ears burned. She longed to tear the letter; but the guarding bust seemed mocking her; and she turned with the thought: 'I'll go and meet him; I can't wait here.'

She walked out into the moonlit garden, and slowly down the whitened road towards the station. A magical, dewless night! She took a short cut through a beech clump. The moonbeams had stolen in, frosting the boles and boughs, casting a ghostly grey over the shadow-patterned beechmast. Not a leaf moved in there, no living thing stirred. 'I'll bring him back through here,' she thought. And she waited at the far corner, where he must pass. The train came in; a car went whizzing by, a cyclist, the first foot-passenger, breaking into a run. It was he, and, calling out, she ran back into the shadow of the trees. He came rushing after her.

They sat down on a great root, and leaning against him, she said:

"Have you had a hard day?"

"Yes; got hung up by a late consultation; and old Leyton asked me to come and dine."

Under Gyp the ground seemed to give a little.

"The Leytons—Eaton Square? A big dinner?"

"No. Only the old people, and Bertie and Diana."

"Diana? The girl we met coming out of the theatre?"

"When? Oh—ah! What a memory, Gyp!"

"Yes; it's good for things that interest me."

"Why? Did she interest you?"

Gyp looked up.

"Yes. Is she clever?"

"I suppose you might call her so."

"And in love with you?"

"Great Scott! Why?"

"Is it very unlikely? I am."

He began kissing her. And, closing her eyes, Gyp thought: 'If only that's not because he doesn't want to answer!' Then, for some minutes, they were silent.

"Answer me truly, Bryan. Do you never feel as if you were wasting yourself on me?"

She was certain of a quiver in his grip of her; but his face was open and serene, his voice teasing.

"Well, hardly ever! Aren't you funny, dear?"

"Promise to let me know when you've had enough of me."

"All right! But don't look for fulfilment in this life."

"I'm not so sure."

"I am."

IV

Coming down next morning, Summerhay went straight to his bureau; his mind was not at ease. "Wasting yourself!" What had he done with that letter of Diana's? He remembered Gyp's coming in just as he finished reading it. Searching the pigeonholes and drawers, moving everything that lay about, he twitched the bust—and the letter lay disclosed. He took it up with a sigh of relief:

"Dear Bryan,

"But *I* say—you *are* wasting yourself. Why, my dear, of course! '*Il faut se faire valoir!*' You have only one foot to put forward; the other is planted in I don't know what mysterious hole. One foot in the grave—at thirty! Really, Bryan! Pull it out. There's such a lot waiting for you. It's no good your telling me to mind my business. I'm speaking for everyone who knows you. We all feel the blight on the rose. Besides, you always were my favourite cousin, ever since I was five and you a horrid little bully of ten; and I simply hate to think of you going slowly down instead of quickly up. Oh! I know 'Damn the world!' But—are you? I should have thought it was 'damning' you! Enough! When are you coming to see us? I've read that book. The man seems to think love is nothing but passion, and passion always fatal. I wonder! Perhaps you know.

"Don't be angry with me for being such a grandmother.

"*Au revoir.*

"Your very good cousin,

"Diana Leyton."

He crammed the letter into his pocket. It must have lain two days under that bust! Had Gyp seen it? He

looked at the bronze face; and the philosopher looked back from his hollow eyes, as if saying: "What do you know of the human heart, my boy—your own, your mistress's, that girl's, or anyone's? A pretty dance the heart will lead you yet! Wrap it round, seal it, drop it in a drawer, and lock the drawer! To-morrow it will be out and skipping on its wrappings. Ho! Ho!" And Summerhay thought: 'Old goat! You never had one!' In the room above, Gyp would still be standing as he had left her, putting the last touch to her hair—a man would be a scoundrel who, even in thought——! "Hallo!" the eyes of the bust seemed saying: "Pity! That's queer! Why not pity that red-haired girl, with the skin so white, and the eyes so burning brown!" Satan! Gyp had his heart; no one in the world could take it from her!

How he had loved her, did love her! She would always be what she had been to him. And the sage's mouth seemed to twist! "Quite so, my dear! But the heart is very funny—very—capacious!" A sound made him turn.

Little Gyp was standing in the doorway.

"Hallo, Baryn!" She came flying to him, and stood on his knees with the sunlight shining on her fluffed-out hair.

"Well, Gipsy! Who's getting a tall girl?"

"I'm goin' to ride."

"Ho, ho!"

"Baryn, let's do Humpty-Dumpty!"

"All right!"

Gyp was still doing one of those hundred things which occupy women for a quarter of an hour after they are "quite ready," when those two came in, and at little Gyp's shout of, "Humpty!" she suspended her needle to watch the sacred rite.

Summerhay had seated himself on the foot-rail of the bed, rounding his arms, sinking his neck, blowing out his cheeks to simulate an egg, till with an unexpected-

ness that little Gyp could always see through, he rolled backward on to the bed.

Simulating "all the king's horses," she tried in vain to put him up again. This immemorial game, watched by Gyp a hundred times, had to-day a special preciousness. If he could be so ridiculously young, what became of her doubts? Looking at his face pulled this way and that, imperturbable under the pommelling of small fingers, she thought: 'And that girl dared to say he was *wasting himself!*' The tall girl with the white skin, the girl of the theatre—the Diana of his last night's dinner—it was she who had written those words! She was sure of it!

That afternoon, at the end of a long gallop on the downs, she turned her head away and said suddenly:

"Is she a huntress?"

"Who?"

"Your cousin—Diana."

In his laziest voice, he answered:

"I suppose you mean—does she hunt me?"

She knew that tone, that expression on his face, knew he was angry; but could not stop herself.

"I did."

"So you're going to become jealous, Gyp?"

At that cold, naked saying his heart sank, and hers quivered. She cantered on. When she reined in again, he glanced at her face and was afraid. It was closed up against him. He said softly:

"I didn't mean that, Gyp."

But she shook her head. He *had* meant to hurt her! And she said:

"Look at that long white cloud, and the apple-green in the sky—rain to-morrow. One ought to enjoy any fine day as if it were the last."

Uneasy, ashamed, yet still a little angry, Summerhay rode on beside her.

That night she cried in her sleep; and, when he awakened her, clung to him and sobbed out:

"Oh! I thought you'd left off loving me!"

For a long time he held and soothed her. Never! He would never leave off loving her!

But a cloud no broader than your hand can spread and cover the whole day.

V

The summer passed, with always a little patch of silence in her heart, and in his. The tall, bright days grew taller, slowly passed their zenith, slowly shortened. On Saturdays and Sundays, sometimes with Winton and little Gyp, but more often alone, they went on the river, which for Gyp had never lost the magic of their first afternoon upon it. All the week she looked forward to these hours with him, as if the surrounding water secured her against a world that would take him from her, if it could, and against that side of his nature which so long ago she had named "old Georgian." She had once adventured to the law courts, to see him in his wig and gown. Under that stiff grey crescent on his broad forehead, he seemed so hard and clever—so of a world to which she never could belong, a brilliant, bullying world. She only possessed and knew one side of him! On the river, she had him utterly to herself—lovable, lazy, impudently loving, lying with his head in her lap, plunging in for a swim, splashing round her; or plying his slow sculls down-stream, singing, "Away, my rolling river." It was blessed to lose for a few hours each week the growing consciousness that she could never have the whole of him. But all the time the patch of silence grew.

When the long vacation came, she heroically resolved that he must have a month away from her. While Betty was at the sea with little Gyp, she would take her father for his cure. She held inflexibly to this resolve, and, after many protests, he said with a shrug:

"Very well—if you're so keen to get rid of me."

Keen to get rid! She forced her feeling back, and said, smiling:

"At last! There's a good boy!" If only it would bring him back to her exactly as he had been. She asked no questions as to where, or to whom, he would go.

Tunbridge Wells, that charming purgatory where the retired prepare their souls for more permanent retirement,

was dreaming on its hills in long rows of adequate villas. Its commons and woods had remained unscorched, so that the retired had not to any extent deserted it for the sea. They still shopped in the Pantiles, strolled the uplands, or flourished their golf-clubs in the grassy parks; still drank tea in each other's houses and frequented the many churches. From every kind of life they had retired, and, waiting now for a more perfect day, were doing their utmost to postpone it.

Winton had rooms in a hotel where he could bathe and drink waters without having to climb hills. It was the first cure Gyp had attended since Wiesbaden, six years ago. She felt so utterly, so strangely different! Then life had been sparkling sips of every drink; now it was one long still draught, to quench a thirst unquenchable.

She lived for the post, and if, by any chance, she did not get her daily letter, her heart sank to the depths. She wrote every day, sometimes twice, then tore up the second letter, remembering why she had set herself to undergo this separation. During the first week, his letters had a certain equanimity; in the second, they became ardent; in the third, they were fitful—beginning to look forward, or moody and dejected; and they were shorter. During this third week Aunt Rosamund joined them. She was a staunch supporter of Gyp's new life, which, in her view, served Fiorsen right. She had a definitely low opinion of men, and a lower of the existing marriage-laws; any woman who struck a blow at them was something of a heroine, though in fact Gyp was quite guiltless of the desire to strike a blow. Aunt Rosamund's aristocratic and rebellious blood boiled with hatred of what she called the "stuffy people" who still held that women were men's property. It had made her specially careful never to put herself in that position.

She brought a piece of news.

"I was walking down Bond Street past that tea-and-tart shop, my dear—you know, where they have those special coffee creams, and who should come out of it but

Miss Daphne Wing and our friend Fiorsen; and pretty hang-dog he looked. He came up to me, with his little lady watching him like a lynx. Really, my dear, I was rather sorry for him; he'd got that hungry look of his; she'd been doing all the eating, I'm sure. He asked me how you were.

"'When you see her,' he said, 'tell her I haven't forgotten her, and never shall. But she was quite right; this is the sort of lady that I'm fit for.' And the way he looked at that girl made me feel quite uncomfortable. Then he gave me one of his little bows; and off they went, she as pleased as Punch. I really was half sorry for him."

Gyp said quietly:

"You needn't have been, Auntie; he'll always be able to be sorry for himself."

Aunt Rosamund was silent, a little shocked. The poor lady had not lived with Fiorsen!

That same afternoon Gyp was sitting in a shelter on the common, thinking her one long thought: 'To-day is Thursday! Eleven days—still!'—when three figures came toward her, a man, a woman, and what should have been a dog. Love of beauty and the rights of man had forced its nose back, deprived it of half its ears, and all but three inches of tail. It had asthma—and waddled. A voice said:

"This 'll do, Maria. We can take the sun 'ere."

In that voice was the permanent cold hoarseness caught beside innumerable graves. Gyp recognised Mr. Wagge. He had taken off his beard, leaving side-whiskers, and Mrs. Wagge had filled out wonderfully. They settled down beside her.

"You sit here, Maria; you won't get the sun in your eyes."

"No, Robert; I'll sit here. You sit there."

"No, *you* sit there."

"No, *I* will. Come, Duckie!"

The dog, stock still on the pathway, was gazing at Gyp. Mr. Wagge followed the direction of its glance.

"Oh!" he said, "this is a surprise!" And fumbling at his straw hat, he passed his other hand over his sleeve and held it out. While she was shaking it, the dog moved forward and sat down on her feet. Mrs. Wagge also extended a shiny glove.

"This is a pleasure," she murmured. "Who *would* have thought of meeting you! Oh, don't let Duckie sit against your pretty frock! Come, Duckie!"

Duckie rested his back against Gyp's shin-bones. Mr. Wagge said abruptly:

"You 'aven't come to live here, 'ave you?"

"Oh no! I'm only with my father for the baths."

"Ah! I thought not, never havin' seen you. We've been retired here ourselves a matter of twelve months. A pretty spot."

"Yes; lovely, isn't it?"

"We wanted nature. The air suits us, though a bit er—too irony, as you might say. But it's a long-lived place. We were quite a time lookin' round."

Mrs. Wagge added:

"We'd thought of Wimbledon, but Mr. Wagge liked this better; he can get his walk, here; and it's more—select, perhaps. We have several friends. The church is very nice."

Mr. Wagge said bluffly:

"I was always chapel; but there's something in a place like this makes church seem more suitable; my wife always had a leaning that way. I never conceal my actions."

"It's a question of atmosphere, isn't it?"

Mr. Wagge shook his head.

"No; I don't hold with incense—we're not 'Igh Church. And how are *you*, ma'am? We often speak of you. You're looking well."

His face had become a dusky orange, Mrs. Wagge's the colour of a doubtful beetroot. The dog stirred, snuffled, and fell heavily against her legs again. She said quietly:

"I was hearing of Daisy to-day. She's quite a star now, isn't she?"

Mrs. Wagge sighed. Mr. Wagge looked away and answered:

"It's a sore subject. Making her forty and fifty pound a week, and run after in all the papers. A success—no doubt about it. Saving a matter of fifteen 'undred a year, I shouldn't be surprised. Why, at my best, the years the influenza was so bad, I never cleared a thousand nett. She's a success."

Mrs. Wagge added:

"Have you seen her last photograph—the one where she's standing between two hydrangea tubs? It was her own idea."

Mr. Wagge mumbled suddenly:

"I'm always glad to see her when she takes a run down in a car. But I've come here for quiet after the life I've led, and I don't want to think about it, especially before you, ma'am. I don't—and that's a fact."

A silence followed, during which Mr. and Mrs. Wagge looked at their feet, and Gyp looked at the dog.

"Ah!—here you are!" Winton had come up from behind the shelter. Gyp could not help a smile. Her father's weathered, narrow face, half-veiled eyes, thin nose, little crisp, grey moustache which did not hide his firm lips, his lean, erect figure; the very way he stood; his thin, dry, clipped voice, were the absolute antithesis of Mr. Wagge's thickset, stoutly-planted form, thick-skinned, thick-featured face, thick, rather hoarse yet oily voice. It was as if Providence had arranged a demonstration of the extremes of social type.

"Mr. and Mrs. Wagge—my father."

Winton raised his hat. Gyp remained seated, the dog Duckie still on her feet.

"'Appy to meet you, sir. I hope you have benefit from the waters. They're supposed to be most powerful, I believe."

"Thank you—not more deadly than most. Are you drinking them?"

Mr. Wagge smiled.

"Nao!" he said; "we live here."

"Indeed! Do you find anything to do?"

"Well, as a fact, I've come here for rest. But I take a Turkish bath once a fortnight to keep the pores of the skin acting."

Mrs. Wagge added gently:

"It seems to suit my husband wonderfully."

Winton murmured:

"Yes. Is this your dog? Bit of a philosopher, isn't he?"

Mrs. Wagge answered:

"Oh, he's a naughty dog, aren't you, Duckie?"

The dog Duckie, cynosure of every eye, rose and stood panting into Gyp's face. She took the occasion to get up.

"We must go, I'm afraid. Good-bye. It's been very nice to meet you again. When you see Daisy, please give her my love."

Mrs. Wagge unexpectedly took a handkerchief from her reticule. Mr. Wagge cleared his throat heavily. Gyp was conscious of the dog Duckie waddling after her, and of Mrs. Wagge calling, "Duckie! Duckie!" from behind her handkerchief.

Winton said softly:

"So *those two* got that pretty filly! Well, she didn't show much quality, when you come to think of it. She's still with our friend, according to your aunt."

Gyp nodded.

"Yes; I do hope she's happy."

"*He* isn't, apparently. Serve him right!"

Gyp shook her head.

"Oh no, Dad!"

"Well, one oughtn't to wish any man worse than he's likely to get. But when people dare to look down their noses at you, I——"

"Darling, what does that matter?"

"It matters very much to me!" His mouth relaxed into a grim little smile: "Ah, well—there's not much

to choose between us so far as condemning our neighbours goes."

They opened out to each other more in those few days at Tunbridge Wells than they had for years. Whether the process of bathing softened his crust, or the air that Mr. Wagge found "a bit—er—too irony" had on Winton the opposite effect, he certainly relaxed that first duty of man, the concealment of his spirit.

On the last afternoon of their stay, she strolled out with him through one of the long woods. Moved by the beauty among those sunlit trees, she found it difficult to talk. But Winton, about to lose her, was loquacious. Starting from the sinister change in the racing-world—so plutocratic now, with the American seat, the increase of bookmaking owners, and other tragic occurrences—he launched forth into a jeremiad on the condition of things in general. Parliament, now that members were paid, had lost its self-respect; the towns had eaten up the country; hunting was threatened; the power and vulgarity of the press were appalling; women had lost their heads; and everybody seemed afraid of "breeding." By the time little Gyp was Gyp's age, they would all be under the thumb of Watch Committees, live in Garden Cities, and have to account for every half-crown they spent, and every half-hour of their time; the horse, too, would be an extinct animal, brought out once a year at the lord mayor's show. He hoped he might not be alive to see it. And suddenly he added: "What do you think happens after death, Gyp?"

"Nothing, Dad. I think we just go back."

"Ah—— My idea, too!"

Neither of them had ever known what the other thought about it before!

Gyp murmured:

"*La vie est vaine—*
Un peu d'amour,
Un peu de haine,
Et puis bonjour!"

Not quite a laugh issued from Winton's lips.

"And what they call 'God,'" he said, "after all, what is it? Just the very best you can get out of yourself—so far as I can see. You can't imagine anything more than you can imagine. But there's one thing always puzzled me, Gyp. All my life I've had a single heart. Death comes, and out I go! Then why did I love, if there's to be no meeting after?"

"Perhaps loving somebody or something with all your heart is all in itself."

Winton stared.

"Ye-es," he said at last. "The religious Johnnies are saving their money to put on a horse that'll never run after all. Those Yogi chaps in India—there they used to sit, the world might rot for all they cared—they were going to be all right themselves, in Kingdom Come. But suppose it doesn't come?"

Slipping her hand through his arm, she pressed close up to him.

"Dad; you and I will go off into the wind and the sun, and the trees and the waters, like Procris in my picture."

VI

Bryan Summerhay got into the midnight express from Edinburgh with two distinct emotions in his heart—regret for the girl he was leaving behind, and longing for the woman he was going to rejoin. How could he feel both at once? And yet he found it perfectly easy, lying in his bunk, to dwell on memories of Diana handing him tea, or glancing up while he turned the pages of her songs, with enticement in her eyes; and the next moment to be swept by longing for Gyp's arms around him, for her voice, her eyes, and her lips on his. He was returning to feelings and companionship which he knew were the most deeply satisfying he would ever have. Yet he could ache a little for that red-haired girl!

From that queer seesaw of feeling he fell asleep, dreamed as men only can in a train, was awakened by the hollow silence in some station, slept again, for hours it seemed, woke still at the same station, fell into a sound sleep at last that ended at Willesden in broad daylight. He had but one emotion now, one longing—to get to Gyp. And in his cab he smiled, enjoying the smell of the London morning.

She was standing in her bedroom, at the hotel, deadly pale, quivering from head to foot; and when he flung his arms round her, she closed her eyes. With his lips on hers, he could feel her almost fainting; and he too had no consciousness of anything but that long kiss.

Next day they went to a little place near Fécamp. In that Normandy countryside all things were large—people, beasts, the unhedged fields, the courtyards of the farms squared by tall trees, the skies, the sea, even the blackberries large. Gyp was at first supremely happy. But twice there came letters, in a too well remembered writing, with a Scottish postmark. A phantom increases in darkness, solidifies when seen in mist. Jealousy is rooted not in reason, but in the nature that loves desperately, feels proudly. And jealousy flourishes on scepti-

cism. Even if pride would have let her ask, she would not have believed his answers. He would say—if only out of pity—that he never let his thoughts rest on another woman. But, as yet, it was only a phantom. There were many hours in those three weeks when she felt he really loved her, and so—was happy.

They went back at the end of the first week in October. Little Gyp was now an accomplished horsewoman. Under the tutelage of old Pettance, she had been riding round "the wild," her firm brown legs astride of her mouse-coloured pony, her little brown face, with excited, dark eyes, erect, her auburn curls flopping on her little straight back. She wanted to "go out riding" with Grandy and Mum and Baryn. The first days were spent by them all in fulfilling her new desires. Then term began, and Gyp sat down again to the long sharing of Summerhay with his other life.

VII

The old Scotch terrier, Ossian, lay on the path in the pale, November sunshine. He had lain there since his master went up by the early train. Sixteen years old, he was deaf now and disillusioned, and every time his eyes seemed to say: "You will leave me once too often!" The other nice people about the house were becoming daily less a substitute for what he had not much time left to enjoy; nor could he any longer bear a stranger within the gate. From her window, Gyp saw him get up and stand with ridged back, growling at the postman. Fearing for the man's calves, she hastened out.

A letter in that dreaded handwriting marked "Immediate," and forwarded from his chambers. She put it to her nose. A scent—of what? Her thumb-nails sought the flap. She laid the letter down—she wanted to open it too much. And instantly the thought went through her: 'If I read it, and there was nothing!' All her jealous misgivings of months past would be at rest! But if there *were* something! She would lose at one stroke her faith in him, her faith in herself—his love, and her own self-respect. Could she not take it up to him herself? By the three o'clock slow train, she could get to him soon after five. Just time to walk to the station. She ran upstairs. Little Gyp was sitting on the top stair, looking at a picture-book.

"I'm going up to London, darling. Tell Betty I may be back to-night, or perhaps not. Give me a good kiss."

Little Gyp gave the good kiss.

"Let me see you put your hat on, Mum."

While she was putting on her hat and furs, she thought: 'I shan't take a bag; I can always make shift.' She ran down, caught up the letter, and hastened away to the station. In the train she took the letter out. How she hated that writing for the fears it had given her these past months! If that girl knew what anxiety and suffering she caused, would she stop writing? And she tried

to conjure up that face seen only for a minute, the sound of the voice—but once heard—of one accustomed to have her own way. No! It would only make her persevere. Fair game, against a woman with no claim—but that of love. Thank heaven she had not taken him away from any woman—unless—that girl! In all these years she had never got to know his secrets. She stood at the window of her empty carriage. There was the river—and there the backwater where he had begged her to come to him for good. It looked so different, bare and shorn, under the light grey sky; the willows all polled, the reeds cut down.

The train was late; it was already growing dark when she reached Paddington and took a cab to the Temple. Strange to be going there for the first time! At Temple Lane she stopped the cab and walked down that narrow, ill-lighted, busy channel into the heart of the Great Law.

"Up those stone steps, miss; along the railin', second doorway." In the doubtful light she scrutinised the names. "Summerhay—second floor." Her heart beat fast. What would he say? How greet her? Was it not absurd, dangerous, to have come? He would be having a consultation, perhaps. There would be a clerk or someone to beard, and what name could she give? On the first floor she paused, took out a blank card, and pencilled on it:

"Can I see you a minute?—G."

Then, taking a long breath to quiet her heart, she went on up. There was the name, and there the door. She rang—no one came; listened—could hear no sound. All looked massive and bleak and dim—the iron railings, stone stairs, bare walls, oak door. She rang again. What should she do? Leave the letter? Not see him after all—her little romance all come to naught—just a chilly visit to Bury Street, where perhaps there would be no

one but Mrs. Markey, for her father, she knew, was at Mildenham, hunting, and would not be up till Sunday! And she thought: 'I'll leave the letter, go back to the Strand, have some tea, and try again.'

She took out the letter, pushed it through the slit of the door, heard it fall into the wire cage; then went slowly down into Temple Lane. It was thronged with men and boys, at the end of the day's work. She had nearly reached the Strand, when a woman's figure caught her eye. She was walking with a man on the far side; their faces were turned towards each other. Gyp heard their voices and stood looking back after them. They passed under a lamp; the light glinted on the woman's hair, on a trick of Summerhay's, the lift of his shoulder, when he was denying something; she heard his voice, high-pitched. She watched them cross, mount the stone steps she had just come down, pass along the railed stone passage, enter the doorway, disappear. And such horror seized on her that she could hardly walk away.

"Oh no! Oh no! Oh no!" So it went in her mind —moaning, like a cold, rainy wind through dripping trees. What did it mean? In this miserable tumult she never once thought of going back to his chambers. She had no notion what she was doing, where going, and crossed the streets without the least attention to traffic. She came to Trafalgar Square, and leaned against its parapet in front of the National Gallery. Here she had her first coherent thought: So that was why his chambers had been empty! No clerk—no one! That they might be alone. Only that morning he had kissed her! A dreadful little laugh got caught in her throat, confused with a sob. Why had she a heart? Against the plinth of one of the lions, a young man leaned, with his arms round a girl, pressing her to him. Gyp turned from the sight and resumed her wandering. She went up Bury Street. No light! It did not matter; she could not have gone in.

The trees of the Green Park, under which she passed,

had still a few leaves, gleaming copper-coloured like that girl's hair. Torturing visions came to her. Those empty chambers! And he would lie to her. He had acted a lie already! She had not deserved that. Sense of the injustice done her was the first relief she felt—definite emotion in a mind clouded by sheer misery. She had not had one thought or look for any man but him since that night down by the sea, when he came to her across the garden in the moonlight—not one thought! Poor relief enough! In Hyde Park, wandering along a pathway diagonally across the grass, she began searching her memory for signs of *when* he had changed to her. She could not find them. He had not changed to her. Could one act love then? Act passion, or—when he kissed her nowadays, was he thinking of that girl?

Love! Why had it such possession of her, that a little thing—only the sight of him with another—should make her suffer so? What should she do? Crawl home, creep into her hole! At Paddington she found a train just starting, and got in. There were other people in the carriage, business men from the city, lawyers, from that—place where she had been. She was glad of the crackling evening papers and stolid faces giving her looks of stolid interest from behind them, glad to have to keep her mask on, afraid of the violence of her emotion. One by one they got out, to their cars or their constitutionals, and she was left alone to gaze at the deserted river in the light of a moon smothered behind the sou'-westerly sky. For one wild moment she thought: 'Shall I open the door and step out—one step—peace!'

She hurried away from the station. It was raining, and she was glad of the freshness on her hot face. Through the beech clump the wind was sighing, soughing, driving the dark boughs, tearing off the leaves, little black wet shapes whirling at her face. Wild melancholy in that swaying wood. She ran through the deep rustling drifts not yet quite drenched. They clung all wet round her thin stockings. At the edge, she paused for breath, peer-

ing back; then, bending her head to the rain, ran on in the open.

She reached her room, without being seen. Huddling before the freshly-lighted fire, she listened to the wind driving through the poplars; and there came back to her the words of that Scottish song:

> "*And my heart reft of its own sun,*
> *Deep lies in death-torpor cold and grey.*"

Presently she crept into bed, and at last fell asleep.

She woke next morning with the joyful thought: 'It's Saturday; he'll be down soon after lunch!' And then she remembered. It was as if a devil entered into her—of stubborn pride, blacker with every hour of that morning. That she might not be in when he came, she ordered her mare, and rode up on the downs alone. The rain had ceased, but the wind still blew strong from the sou'-west, and the sky was torn and driven in swathes of white and grey—puffs of what looked like smoke scurrying across the cloud-banks and glacier-blue rifts between. One could see far—over to Wittenham Clumps across the Valley, to the high woods above the river in the east—away, in the south and west, under that strange, torn sky, to a whole autumn land, of whitish grass, bare field, woods of grey and gold and brown, fast being pillaged. But all that sweep of wind, and sky, freshness of rain, and distant colour, could not drive out of her heart the hopeless aching, the devil begotten of it.

VIII

Some men are born gamblers. They cannot repulse fate when it tantalises them with a risk.

Summerhay loved Gyp, was not tired of her either physically or mentally, even felt sure he would never tire, yet he had dallied for months with the risk which yesterday had come to a head. And now, in the train, returning to her, he felt unquiet. Looking back, it was difficult to tell when the sapping of his defences had begun. The girl was herself a gambler. He did not respect her as he respected Gyp; she did not touch him as Gyp touched him, was not—not half—so deeply attractive; but she had the power of turning his head at moments, a queer, burning, skin-deep fascination, the lure of an imperious vitality. In love with life, she had made him feel that he was letting things slip by. And to drink deep of life was his nature, too. Their far-off cousinhood had bred familiarity not great enough to breed contempt, just sufficient to remove those outer defences to intimacy, the conquest of which, as a rule, demands conscious effort.

He had not realised the extent of the danger; certainly not foretold the crisis of yesterday evening. He had received a telegram from her at lunch-time, exacting the fulfilment of a jesting promise, made in Scotland, that she should have tea with him and see his chambers—a small and harmless matter. He had not reckoned that she would look so pretty, lying back in his big Oxford chair, with furs thrown open so that her white throat showed. Not reckoned that, when he bent to take her cup, she would put out her hands, draw his head down, press her lips to his, and say: "Now you know!" His head had gone round, still went round, thinking of it! That was all. A little matter. And yet—poison was in his blood; a kiss cut short—leaving him gazing at her, inhaling that scent of hers—like a pinewood's scent, while she gathered up her gloves, fastened her furs, as if it had been he, not she, who had snatched that kiss.

And her hand had pressed his arm against her as they went down the stairs. At the Temple Station, she had looked back at him with a little half-mocking smile of challenge, comradeship, promise. Back in his chambers, he had found the letter, readdressed by Gyp from the Red House. And a faint uneasiness at its having gone down there passed through him. He spent a restless evening at the club, playing cards and losing; sat up late in his chambers over a case; had a hard morning's work, and only now that he was nearing Gyp, realised that he had lost utterly the straightforward simplicity of things.

Finding that she had gone out riding alone, his uneasiness increased. Usually she waited for him to ride with her. Had she not expected him by the usual train? He changed and went to the stables. Old Pettance was sitting on a corn-bin, poring over an old Ruff's Guide, containing records of his long-past glory, scored under by a pencil: "June Stakes: Agility. E. Pettance 3rd." "Tidport Selling H'Cap: Dorothea, E. Pettance, 0." "Salisbury Cup: Also ran Plum Pudding, E. Pettance," with other triumphs.

"Good-afternoon, sir; windy afternoon, sir. The mistress 'as been gone over two hours, sir. She wouldn't take me with 'er."

"Hurry up, then, and saddle Hotspur."

"Yes, sir; very good, sir."

Over two hours! He went up on to the downs, by the way they generally came home, and for an hour he rode, keeping a sharp lookout, before turning home, hot and uneasy. On the hall table were her riding-whip and gloves. His heart cleared, and he ran upstairs. She was doing her hair and turned her head sharply when he entered. Hurrying across, he had the absurd feeling that she was standing at bay. She drew back, and said:

"No! Don't pretend! Anything's better than pretence!"

He had never seen her look or speak like that—her face so hard, her eyes so stabbing! And he recoiled.

"What's the matter, Gyp?"

"Nothing. Only—don't pretend!" And, turning to the glass, she went on coiling up her hair.

She looked lovely, flushed from her ride in the wind; he had a longing to seize her in his arms. With fear and a sort of anger, he said:

"You might explain, I think."

"*You* can do that. I am in the dark."

"I don't in the least understand."

"Don't you?" There was something deadly in her disregard of him, while her fingers moved swiftly about her dark, shining hair—something appallingly sudden in this hostility. Summerhay sat down on the bed. Was it that letter? But how? It had not been opened.

"What on earth has happened, Gyp, since I went up yesterday? Speak out; don't keep me like this!"

She turned and looked at him.

"Don't pretend that you're upset because you can't kiss me! Don't be false, Bryan! You know it's been pretence for months."

Summerhay's voice grew high.

"I think you've gone mad. I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, yes, you do. Did you get a letter yesterday marked 'Immediate'?"

So it *was* that! He hardened, and said stubbornly:

"Yes; from Diana Leyton. Do you object?"

"No; only, how do you think it got back to you from here so quickly?"

He said dully:

"I don't know. By post, I suppose."

"No; I put it in your letter-box myself—at half-past five."

Summerhay's mind was trained to quickness; the full meaning of those words came home to him at once.

"I suppose you saw us, then."

"Yes."

He got up, made a helpless movement, and said:

"Oh, Gyp, don't! Don't be so hard! I swear by——"

Gyp gave a little laugh, turned her back, and went on coiling at her hair. And a horrid feeling that he must knock his head against something rose in Summerhay. He said helplessly:

"I only gave her tea. Why not? She's my cousin. It's nothing! Why should you think the worst of me? She asked to see my chambers. I couldn't refuse."

"Your *empty* chambers? Don't, Bryan—it's pitiful! I can't bear to hear you."

At that lash of the whip, Summerhay turned on her.

"It pleases you to think the worst, then?"

Gyp stopped the movement of her fingers.

"I've always told you that you were perfectly free. Do you think I haven't felt it going on for months? There comes a moment when pride revolts—that's all. Don't lie to me, *please!*"

"I am not in the habit of lying." An awful feeling of a net round him, through which he could not break—a net woven by that cursed intimacy, kept from her all to no purpose—beset him. How to make her see the truth, that it was only her he *really* loved?

"Gyp, I swear to you there's nothing but one kiss, and that was not my——"

She cried out:

"Oh, go away!"

He put his hands on her shoulders.

"It's only you I really love. I swear it! You must believe me. It's foolish—foolish! Think of our love—think of all——" Her face was frozen; he loosened his grasp, and muttered: "Oh, your pride is awful!"

"Yes, it's all I've got. You can go to her when you like."

"Go to her! If you wish, I'll never see her again."

"Oh, don't! What *is* the use?"

At that moment, Summerhay meant absolutely what

he said. And he could not make Gyp believe it! How truly terrible! How unjust and unreasonable of her! What had he done that she should be so unbelieving—should think him such a shallow scoundrel? Could he help the girl's kissing him? Help her being fond of him? Help having a man's nature? Unreasonable, unjust, ungenerous! And giving her a furious look, he went out.

He went down to his study, flung himself on the sofa and turned his face to the wall. He had not been there five minutes before his anger evaporated into the chill of deadly and insistent fear. He was up against her nature—its pride and scepticism—yes—and the very depth and singleness of her love! She wanted nothing but him, he wanted and took so much else. He perceived this but dimly, part of the feeling that he could not break through, of the irritable longing to put his head down and butt his way out, no matter what the obstacles. How long was this state of things to last? He got up and began to pace the room, his head thrown back; and every now and then he shook that head, trying to free it from this deadly "Chancery." Diana! He had said he would not see her again. After that kiss—after her last look back at him! How break so suddenly? He shivered. Ah! how wretched it all was! There must be some way out—some way! Surely some way! But how?

In the wood of life, fatality had halted, turned her dim dark form among the trees, shown him her pale cheek and those black eyes of hers, shown with awful swiftness her strange reality!

IX

Gyp stayed in her room doing little things—as a woman will when particularly wretched—sewing ribbons into her garments, polishing her rings. The devil that had entered into her when she awoke that morning, having had his fling, slunk away, leaving the old bewildered misery. She had stabbed her lover, felt pleasure in stabbing, and now was bitterly sad. What use—what satisfaction? How by vengeful prickings cure this deep wound, disperse the canker in her life? How heal herself by hurting him she loved? If he came up again and made a sign she would throw herself into his arms. But he did not come, and she did not go down—too miserable. It grew dark, but she did not draw the curtains; sight of the windy moonlit garden and the leaves driving across brought a melancholy distraction. Little Gyp came in. There was a tree blown down, and she had climbed on it; they had picked two baskets of acorns, and the pigs had been so greedy; she had been blown away, Betty had run after her. Baryn was walking in the study; he was so busy he had only given her one kiss.

The wind! If only it would blow out of her heart this sickening sense that all was over, no matter how he might pretend to love her out of pity! In her nature, so sceptical and self-distrustful, confidence, shaken to the roots, could never be restored. Her proud nature, that went all lengths, could never be content with a half-love. She—who had been afraid of love, and when it came had fought till it swept her away; who, since then, had lived for love and nothing else, who gave all, and wanted all—knew for certain and for ever that she could not have that all.

For months he had been thinking at least a little of another woman. Even if she believed that there had been no more than a kiss—was it nothing that they had reached that kiss? This girl—this cousin—held all the cards,—the world, family influence, security of life;

and more, terribly much more—a man's longing for the young and unawakened. This girl he could *marry!* It was this thought which haunted her. A mere momentary outbreak of man's natural wildness she could forget—oh, yes! But this girl, his own cousin, besieging, dragging him away. How in decent pride, keep him from her, fetter him?

She heard him come up to his dressing-room, and while he was there, stole out and down. Life must go on, the servants be hoodwinked. She went to the piano and played. He came in presently and stood by the fire, silent.

Dinner, with the needful talk, was almost unendurable, and directly it was over, they went, he to his study, she back to the piano. There she sat, ready to strike the notes if anyone came in; and tears fell on the hands in her lap. She longed to go and clasp him in her arms and cry: "I don't care—I don't care! Do what you like—go to her—if only you'll love me a little!" And yet to love or be loved—a *little!* Was it possible? Not to her!

In sheer misery she went to bed, heard him come up and go into his dressing-room—and, at last, in the firelight saw him kneeling by her.

"Gyp!"

She raised herself and threw her arms round him. Such an embrace a drowning woman might have given. Pride was abandoned in her effort to feel him close once more, to recover the irrecoverable past. For a long time she listened to his justifications, his protestations of undying love—strange to her and painful, boyish and pathetic. And she soothed him. In that hour she rose to a height above herself. What happened to her own heart did not matter if he was happy, had all that he wanted with her and away from her—if need be, always away from her.

But, when he had gone to sleep, a terrible time began; for in the small hours, when things are at their worst, she could not keep back her weeping. It woke him, and

all began again; the burden of her cry: "It's gone!" the burden of his: "It's *not!*" As in all human tragedies, both were right according to their natures. She gave him all herself, wanted all in return, and could not have it. He wanted her, the rest besides, and no complaining, and could not have it. He did not admit impossibility; she did.

At last came another of those pitying lulls. Long she lay awake, staring at the darkness, admitting despair, trying to find how to bear it, not succeeding. Impossible to cut his other life away from him—impossible that, while he lived it, this girl should not be tugging him away from her. Impossible to watch and question him. Impossible to live dumb and blind, accepting the crumbs left over, showing nothing. He was not single-hearted and she was. In spite of all his protestations, she knew he didn't really want to give up that girl. Even if the girl would let him go! And slowly there formed within her a gruesome little plan to test him. Gently withdrawing her arms, she turned over and slept, exhausted.

Next morning, remorselessly carrying out her plan, she forced herself to smile and talk as if nothing had happened, watching the relief in his face, his obvious delight at the change, with a fearful aching in her heart. She waited till he was ready to go down, and then, still smiling, said:

"Forget all about yesterday, darling. Promise me you won't let it make any difference. You must keep up your friendship; you mustn't lose anything. I shan't mind; I shall be quite happy." He knelt down with his forehead against her waist. And, stroking his hair, she repeated: "I shall only be happy if you take everything that comes your way. I shan't mind a bit." And she watched his face that had lost its trouble.

"Do you really mean that?"

"Yes, really!"

"Then you do see that it's nothing, never has been anything—compared with you—never!"

He had accepted her crucifixion.

"It would be so awkward for you to give up that intimacy. It would hurt your cousin so."

She saw the relief in his face deepen, and suddenly laughed. He got up from his knees and stared at her.

"Oh, Gyp, for God's sake don't begin again!"

With a sob she turned away and buried her face in her hands. To all his prayers and kisses she answered nothing, and, breaking away from him, rushed towards the door. A wild thought possessed her. If she were dead, it would be all right for him, quiet—peaceful, quiet—for them all! But he had thrown himself in the way.

"Gyp, for heaven's sake! I'll give her up—of course I'll give her up. Do—do—be reasonable! I don't care a finger-snap for her compared with you!"

And presently there came another of those lulls that both were beginning to know were mere pauses of exhaustion.

The church bells were ringing, there was a lull, too, in the sou'-westerly gale—one of those calms that fall in the night and last twelve or fifteen hours, and the garden was all strewn with leaves, from green spotted with yellow to deep copper.

Summerhay kept with her all the morning, making all sorts of little things to do. And gradually he lost his fear, she seemed so calm now, and his was a nature that bore trouble badly, ever impatient to shake it off. But, after lunch, the spirit-storm beat up again, with a swiftness which showed once more how fearfully deep and lasting was the wound. He had simply asked her whether he should try to match something for her when he went up to-morrow. She was silent a moment, then answered:

"Oh no, thanks; you'll have other things to do: people to see!"

Her voice, her face, showed him, with fresh force of revelation, what paralysis had fallen on his life. If he

could not reconvince her of his love, he would be in perpetual fear—that he might come back and find her gone, that she might even do something terrible to herself. He looked at her with a sort of horror, and went out of the room. The feeling that he must hit his head against something was on him again, and again he sought to get rid of it by tramping up and down. Such a little thing, such fearful consequences! All her balance, her sanity almost, destroyed. Was what he had done so very dreadful? He could not help this girl loving him!

In the night Gyp had said: "You are cruel. Is there any man in the world I wouldn't hate the sight of if I knew that to see him gave you a moment's pain?" It was true—he felt it true. But he couldn't hate this girl simply because she loved him—not even to save Gyp pain. It was not reasonable, not possible. Why could not women see things in proportion? See that a man might want other friendships, passing moments of passion, and yet love her just the same? She thought him cruel—what for? Because he had kissed a girl who had kissed him; because he liked talking to her, and—yes, might even lose his head with her. But cruel! He was not! Gyp would always be first with him. He must *make* her see it. How? give up everything? Give up—Diana? Well, he could! His feeling was not deep—that was God's truth! But it would be difficult, awkward, brutal, to give her up completely! It could be done, though, sooner than that Gyp should think him cruel to her. It could be—should be done!

Only, would it be any use? Would she believe? Would she not always now suspect him when he was away from her, whatever he did? Must he then sit down here in inactivity? A gust of anger swept him. Why should she treat him as if he were unreliable? Or—was he? He stood still. When Diana had put her arms round his neck, he could no more have resisted answering her kiss than he could now fly over those poplar-trees. But he was not a blackguard, not cruel, not a liar! How

could he have helped it all? He need never have answered the girl's first letter, nearly a year ago. But how could he foresee? Since then, all so gradual; nothing, really, almost nothing! Again anger surged in his heart. She must have read the letter under that cursed bust all those months ago. The poison had been working ever since! And in sudden fury at that miserable mischance, he drove his fist into the bronze face. The bust fell over; Summerhay looked stupidly at his bruised hand. A silly thing to do! But it had quenched his anger. What could he do? If only she would believe! But again he had the sickening conviction that nothing would avail. He was only at the beginning of a trouble that had no end. Like a rat in a cage, his mind tried to rush out of this entanglement now at one end, now at the other. Ah, well! If it was hopeless—let it go! And, shrugging his shoulders, he went out to the stables, and told old Pettance to saddle Hotspur. While waiting, he thought: 'Shall I ask her to come?' But he could not stand another bout of misery; and, mounting, he rode up towards the downs.

Hotspur, the sixteen-hand brown horse, with not a speck of white, that Gyp had ridden hunting the day she first saw Summerhay, was nine years old. His master's two faults as a horseman—a habit of thrusting, and not too light hands—had hardened his rather hard mouth, and something had happened in the stables to put him into a queer temper; or perhaps he felt—as horses will—the disturbance raging within his rider. He gave an exhibition of his worst qualities, and Summerhay derived a perverse pleasure from his waywardness. He rode a good hour up there; then, hot, with aching arms, he made his way back towards home and entered what little Gyp called "the wild," those two rough sedgy fields with the linhay in the corner where they joined. There was a gap in the hedge-growth of the bank between them, and at this he put Hotspur at speed. The horse went over like a bird; and Summerhay felt a moment's joy.

He turned him round and sent him at it again, and again Hotspur cleared it beautifully. But the animal's blood was up. Summerhay could hardly hold him. With an: "Oh, you *brute*, don't pull!" he jagged the horse's mouth. Into his mind darted Gyp's word: "Cruel!" And, in one of those queer nerve-crises that beset us all, he struck the pulling horse.

They were cantering towards the corner where the fields joined, and suddenly he was aware that he could no more hold the beast than a steam-engine if it had been under him. Straight at the linhay Hotspur dashed, and Summerhay thought: 'My God! He'll kill himself!' Straight at the old stone linhay, covered by the great ivy bush. Right at it—into it! Summerhay ducked his head. Not low enough—the ivy concealed a beam! A sickening crash! Torn backward out of the saddle, he fell on his back in a pool of leaves and mud. And the horse, slithering round the linhay walls, checked in his own length, unhurt, snorting, frightened, came out, turning his wild eyes on his master, who never stirred, then trotted back into the field, throwing up his head.

X

When, at her words, Summerhay went out of the room, Gyp's heart sank. All the morning she had tried so hard to keep back her despairing jealousy, and now at the first reminder had broken down again. It was beyond her strength! To live day after day knowing that he, up in London, was either seeing that girl or painfully abstaining from seeing her! And, when he returned, to be to him just what she had been, to show nothing—would it ever be possible? If he really loved her, how could he hesitate one second? The very thought of the girl would be abhorrent to him. He would have shown that, not merely said it wildly. Words were no use when they contradicted action. She, who loved with every bit of her, could not grasp that a man can really love and want one woman, yet, at the same time, be attracted by another.

Would life be less miserable if she withdrew from him and went back to Mildenham? Life without him? Impossible! Life with him? Just as impossible, it seemed! She had reached a point of mental anguish when her mind did not really work at all, but rushed helplessly from one fate to the other, no longer trying to decide. And she went on doing little things—mending a hole in one of his gloves, brushing and applying ointment to old Ossy, sorting bills and letters.

At five o'clock, knowing little Gyp must soon be back from her walk, and feeling unable to take part in gaiety, she slipped out and went down towards the river. The lull was over; a south-west wind had begun sighing through the trees again, and gorgeous clouds were piled up from the horizon into the pale blue. She stood watching the grey flood, edged by a scum of torn-off twigs and floating leaves, with the wind shivering above it through the spoiled plume-branches of the willows. She had a

sudden longing for her father; he alone could help her—just a little—by his quietness, and his love, by his mere presence.

She turned away and went up the lane again, walking slowly, thinking hard. Could they not travel—go round the world? Would he give up his work for that? Dare she propose it? But would even that be anything more that a putting-off? She was not enough for him now, she would be still less if his work were cut away. And yet it seemed a gleam in the blackness. She came in at the far end of the fields they called "the wild." Red already tinged the white cloud-banks, towered up in the east beyond the river; and peeping over that mountain-top was the moon, fleecy and unsubstantial in the flax-blue sky. All was wild colour. The oak-trees above the hedgerows had not lost their leaves, and in the rain-washed light had a sheen of old gold with heart of ivy-green; the half-stripped beeches flamed with copper; the russet tufts of the ash-trees glowed. And past Gyp, a single leaf blown off, went soaring, turning over, going up on the rising wind, up—up till it was lost—away.

The rain had drenched the grass, and she turned back. At the gate beside the linhay, a horse was standing. It whinnied to her. Hotspur, saddled, bridled, with no rider. Why? Where? Then she undid the latch, ran through, and saw Summerhay lying in the mud—on his back, with eyes wide open, forehead and hair all blood. Some leaves had dropped on him. God! O God! His eyes had no sight, his lips no breath; his heart did not beat; the leaves had dropped even on his face—in the blood on his poor head. Gyp raised him—stiffened, cold as ice! She gave one cry, and fell, embracing his stiffened body with all her strength, kissing his lips, his eyes, his broken forehead; clasping, warming him, trying to pass life into him; till, at last, she too lay still, her lips on his cold lips, her body on his cold body in the mud and the fallen leaves, while the wind crept and rustled in the

ivy, and went over with the scent of rain. Close by, the horse, uneasy, put his head down and sniffed at her, then, backing away, neighed, and broke into a wild gallop round the field. . . .

Old Pettance, waiting for Summerhay's return to stable up for the night, heard that distant neigh and went to the garden gate, screwing up his little eyes against the sunset. He could see a loose horse galloping down there in "the wild," where no horse should be, and thinking: 'There now; that artful devil's broke away from the guv'nor! Now I'll have to ketch 'im!' he went back, got some oats, and set forth at the best gait of his stiff-jointed feet. The old horseman characteristically did not think of accidents. The guv'nor had got off, no doubt, to unhitch that heavy gate—the one you had to lift. That 'orse—he was a masterpiece of mischief! His difference with the animal still rankled in a mind that did not easily forgive.

Half an hour later, he entered the lighted kitchen, shaking and gasping, tears rolling down his furrowed cheeks into the corners of his gargoyle's mouth.

"O my Gord! Fetch the farmer—fetch an 'urdle! O my Gord! Betty, you and cook—I can't get 'er off him. She don't speak. I felt her—all cold. Come on, you sluts—quick! O my Gord! The poor guv'nor! That 'orse must 'a' galloped into the linhay and killed him. I've seed the marks on the devil's shoulder where he rubbed it scrapin' round the wall. Come on—come on! Fetch an 'urdle or she'll die there on him in the mud. Put the child to bed and get the doctor, and send a wire to London, to the major, to come sharp. Oh, blarst you all—keep your 'eads! What's the good o' howlin' and blubberin'!"

In the whispering corner of those fields, light from a lantern and the moon fell on the old stone linhay, on the ivy, and the broken gate, on the mud, the golden leaves, and the two quiet bodies clasped together. Gyp's

consciousness had flown; there seemed no difference between them. And presently, over the rushy grass, a procession moved back in the wind and the moonlight—two hurdles, two men carrying one, two women and a man the other, and, behind, old Pettance and the horse.

XI

Gyp recovered consciousness in her bed, and her first drowsy movement was towards her mate. With eyes still closed, she turned, and put out her hand to touch him before she dozed off again. No warmth, no substance; through her mind, still in the mists of morphia, thoughts passed vague and lonely: 'Ah, yes, in London!' She turned on her back. London! Something up there! She opened her eyes. So the fire had kept in all night! Someone in a chair, or—was she dreaming? And, suddenly, without knowing why, she began to gasp. The figure moved, turned her face in the firelight. Betty! Gyp closed her eyes. Icy sweat had broken out all over her.

"Betty!"

"Yes, my darlin'."

"What is it?"

"Don't 'ee think—don't 'ee think! Your Daddy 'll be here directly, my sweetie!"

Gyp's eyes passed from the firelight and that rocking figure to the chink of light, hardly light as yet, at one corner of the curtain. Her tongue stole out and passed over her lips; beneath the bedclothes she folded both hands tight across her heart. Then she was not dead with him—not dead! Not gone back with him into the ground—not—— And suddenly there flickered up in her a flame. They were keeping her alive! Curse them!

"Betty, I'm so thirsty. Get me a cup of tea."

"Yes, my lovey, at once. It'll do you good. That's a brave girl."

The moment the door clicked to, Gyp sprang up. Her whole soul was alive with cunning. She ran to the wardrobe, seized her long fur coat, thrust her bare feet into her slippers, wound a piece of lace round her head, and opened the door. All dark, all quiet! Stifling the sound of her feet, she glided down the stairs, slipped back the chain of the front door, opened it, and fled. Like a

shadow she passed across the grass, out of the garden gate, down the road under the black dripping trees. The beginning of light was mixing its grey hue into the darkness; she could just see her feet among the puddles on the road. She heard the whirring of a car on its top gear grinding up the hill, and cowered away against the hedge. Its light came searching along, picking out with a mysterious momentary brightness the bushes and tree-trunks, making the wet road gleam. Gyp saw the chauffeur turn his head back at her, then the car's body passed up into darkness, and its tail-light vanished. A car going to the Red House with her father, or the doctor, helping to keep her alive! She flew on. A man with a dog came out of a gate, and called "Hallo!" She had lost her slippers, and ran with bare feet, unconscious of stones, or the torn-off branches strewing the road, making for the lane that ran down to the river, to the left of the inn, where the bank was free.

She turned into it; a hundred or more yards away, she could see the willows, the width of lighter grey that was the river. The river—and the happiest hours of all her life! If he were anywhere, she would find him there, where he had lain with his head on her breast; where she had dreamed, and seen beauty, and loved him so! She reached the bank. Cold, grey, silent, swifter than yesterday, the stream was flowing down, the shores brightening slowly in the dawn. Gyp stood motionless, gasping after her long run. Her knees gave way; she sank down on the wet grass, clasping her arms round her drawn-up legs, rocking to and fro, with her hair loosened over her face. Her heart felt suffocated. She sat, waiting for breath—breath and strength to let life go, to slip down into the grey water. And that queer apartness from self, which is the property of fever, came on her, so that she seemed to see herself sitting there, waiting; and she thought: 'I shall see myself dead, floating among the reeds. I shall see the birds wondering about me!' And, suddenly, she broke

into a storm of sobbing. Her boy—her boy—and his poor hair! And swaying over, she lay face down, clasping at the wet grass and the earth.

The sun laid a pale streak along the water; a robin twittered; a leaf fell on her bare ankle.

Winton, who had been hunting on Saturday, had returned to town on Sunday by the evening train, and gone straight to his club for supper. Falling asleep over his cigar, he had to be awakened when they desired to close the club for the night. It was past two when he reached Bury Street and found the telegram.

"Something dreadful happened to Mr. Summerhay. Come quick.—BETTY."

Never had he so cursed the loss of his hand as during the time that followed, when Markey had to dress, help his master, pack bags, and fetch a taxi equipped for so long a journey. At half-past three they started. Winton, wrapped in his fur coat, sat a little forward on his seat, ready to put his head through the window and direct the driver. It was a wild night; he would not let Markey, whose chest was not strong, go outside to act as guide. Twice that silent one had spoken.

"That'll be bad for Miss Gyp, sir."

"Bad, yes—terrible."

And later:

"D'you think it means he's dead, sir?"

"God knows, Markey! We must hope for the best."

Could Fate be cruel enough to deal one so soft and loving such a blow?

Betty and a maid were standing at the open garden gate, in the breaking darkness, wringing their hands. Leaping out, he cried:

"What is it, woman? Quick!"

"Oh, sir! My dear's gone. I left her a moment to get her a cup of tea. And she's run out in the cold!"

Winton stood for two seconds as if turned to stone. Then, taking Betty by the shoulder, he asked quietly:

"What happened to *him?*"

Betty could not answer, but the maid said:

"The horse killed him at that linhay, sir, down in 'the wild.' And the mistress was unconscious till quarter of an hour ago."

"Which way did she go?"

"Out here, sir; the door and the gate was open—can't tell which way."

The river!

"Turn the cab round! Stay in, Markey! Betty and you, girl, go down to 'the wild,' and search there at once. Yes? What is it?"

"As we came up the hill, sir, I see a lady or something in a long dark coat with white on her head, against the hedge."

"Right! Drive down again sharp, and use your eyes."

At such moments, thought is impossible. But of thought there was no need, for the gardens of villas and the inn blocked the river at all but one spot. Winton stopped the car where the narrow lane branched down to the bank, and ran. He ran silently on the grass edge, and Markey, imitating, ran behind. When he came in sight of a black shape lying on the bank, he suffered a moment of intense agony, for he thought it was just a dark garment thrown away. Then he saw it move, and, holding up his hand for Markey to stand still, walked on, tiptoeing in the grass. Between that prostrate figure and the water he knelt down and said:

"My darling!"

Gyp raised her head and stared at him. Her white face, with eyes unnaturally dark and large, and hair falling all over it, was strange to him—the face of grief itself. And he knew not how to help, or comfort, or save. In her eyes was the look of a wild animal at the moment of its capture, and instinct made him say:

"I lost her just as cruelly, Gyp."

He saw the words reach her brain, and that wild look waver. Stretching out his arm, he drew her close to him till her cheek was against his, her shaking body against him, and kept murmuring:

"For my sake, Gyp; for my sake!"

When, with Markey's aid, he had got her to the cab, they took her, not back to the house, but to the inn. She was in high fever, and soon delirious. By noon, Aunt Rosamund and Mrs. Markey, summoned by telegram, had arrived; and the whole inn taken lest any noise should disturb her.

At five o'clock Winton was summoned to the little so-called reading-room. A tall woman was standing at the window, shading her eyes with the back of a gloved hand. Though they had lived so long within ten miles of each other, he only knew Lady Summerhay by sight, and he waited for her to speak first.

"There is nothing to say; only, I thought I must see you. How is she?"

"Delirious."

"My poor boy! Did you see him—his forehead? I will take him back home." Tears rolled one after the other slowly down her face under her veil. She had turned to the window, passing her handkerchief up under the veil. Staring at the little strip of darkening lawn, Winton said:

"I will send you all his things, except anything that might help my poor girl."

She turned.

"And so it's ended like this! Major Winton, is there anything behind—were they really happy?"

Winton looked straight at her and answered:

"Too happy!"

Without a quiver, he met those tear-darkened eyes straining at his; with a heavy sigh she once more turned away, drew down her veil, and hastened away.

It was not true—he knew from the mutterings of

Gyp's fever—but no one, not even Summerhay's mother, should hear a whisper if he could help it.

In the days that followed, Gyp, robbed of memory, hung between life and death. Winton hardly left her room, that low room with creepered windows whence the river could be seen, gliding down under the pale November sunshine or black beneath the stars. He watched it, fascinated. He had snatched her from it as by a miracle.

He had refused to have a nurse. Aunt Rosamund and Mrs. Markey were skilled in sickness, and he could not bear that a strange person should listen to those delirious mutterings. His own part of the nursing was to sit and keep her secrets from the others—if he could. He would stay for hours, with eyes fixed on her face. No one could supply so well as he the thread of the familiar, by which the fevered, without knowing, perhaps find their way a little in the mazes where they wander.

He was astonished by the number of inquiries, even people whom he had considered enemies left cards or sent their servants. But the small folk touched him most by their genuine concern for one whose grace and softness had won their hearts. One morning he received a letter forwarded from Bury Street.

"Dear Major Winton,

"I have read a paragraph in the paper about poor Mr. Summerhay's death. And, oh, I feel so sorry for her! She was so good to me; I do feel it most dreadfully. If you think she would like to know how we all feel for her, you would tell her, wouldn't you? I do think it's cruel.

"Very faithfully yours,

"Daphne Wing."

So they knew Summerhay's name—he had not somehow expected that. He did not answer, not knowing what to say.

Sometimes he would cover his ears, to avoid hearing of that long stress of mind at which he had now and then glimpsed. Of the actual tragedy, her wandering spirit did not seem conscious; her lips were always telling her love, repeating the dread of losing his; except when they would give a whispering laugh, uncanny and enchanting, as at some gleam of perfect happiness. Those little laughs were worst of all to hear. He drew a gruesome comfort from the conclusion slowly forced on him. Summerhay's tragic death had cut short a situation which might have had an even more tragic issue. One night in the big chair at the side of her bed, he woke to see her eyes fixed on him. They saw, were her own eyes again. Her lips moved.

"Dad."

"Yes, my pet."

"I remember everything."

At that dreadful little saying, Winton leaned forward and put his lips to her hand, that lay outside the clothes.

"Where is he buried?"

"At Widrington."

"Yes."

It was rather a sigh than a word, and, raising his head, Winton saw her eyes closed again. The white transparency of her cheeks and forehead against the dark lashes and hair was too startling. Was it a living face, or was its beauty that of death?

He bent over. She was breathing—asleep.

XII

The return to Mildenham was made by easy stages on New Year's day—Mildenham, dark, smelling the same, full of the ghosts of old days. For little Gyp, more than five years old now, and beginning to live, this was the pleasantest home yet. In watching her become the spirit of the place, as she herself had once been, Gyp found rest at times. She had not picked up much strength, and if her face was taken unawares, it was the saddest face. Her chief preoccupation was not being taken unawares. To Winton, her smile was almost as sad. He was at his wits' end about her that winter and spring. She made the utmost effort to keep up, and there was nothing to do but watch and wait. No use to force the pace. Time alone could heal—perhaps.

Spring came and passed, and physically she grew strong again; but she had never once gone outside the garden, never once spoken of the Red House, never once of Summerhay. Not that she cherished her grief; she appeared, rather, to do all in her power to forget and mask it. She only had what used to be called a broken heart. Little Gyp, who had been told that "Baryn" had gone away for ever, and that she must "never speak of him for fear of making Mum sad," would stand and watch her mother with puzzled gravity. She once remarked to Winton:

"Mum doesn't live with us, Grandy; she lives away somewhere, I think. Is it with Baryn?"

"Perhaps it is, sweetheart; but don't say that to anybody but me. Don't ever talk of Baryn to anyone else."

"Yes, I know; but where is he, Grandy?"

What could Winton answer?

He rode a great deal with the child, who, like her mother before her, was never so happy as in the saddle; but to Gyp he did not dare suggest it. She never spoke of horses, never went to the stables, passed all the days doing little things about the house, gardening, and sit-

ting at her piano, sometimes playing a little, or merely looking at the keys, her hands clasped in her lap. This was early in the fateful summer, before any as yet felt the world-tremors, or saw the darkness beginning to gather. He often thought: 'If only she had something to take her out of herself!'

In June he proposed a visit to London. To his surprise, she acquiesced at once. They went up in Whitweek. Passing Widrington, he forced himself to a spurt of talk; but later, glancing stealthily round his paper, he saw her face turned to the fields and tears rolling down it. She made no sound, no movement; only, those tears kept rolling down. And, behind his paper, Winton's eyes narrowed and retreated; his face hardened till the skin seemed tight drawn over the bones.

From the station to Bury Street the cab went by narrow by-streets, where the misery of the world was on show—ill-looking men, draggled, over-driven women, jaunty ghosts of little children in gutters and on doorsteps proclaiming by their clay-coloured faces and underfed bodies, the post-datement of the millennium. The lean and smutted houses had a look of dissolution indefinitely put off; there was no more trace of beauty than in a sewer. Gyp sat leaning forward, and Winton felt her hand slip into his.

That evening after dinner—in the room he had furnished for her mother, where the satinwood chairs, the little Jacobean bureau, the old brass candelabra were still as they had been nearly thirty years ago—she said:

"Dad, would you mind if I could make a sort of home at Mildenham for poor children to come and get good air and food?"

Strangely moved by the first wish he had heard her express since the tragedy, Winton said:

"My dear, are you strong enough?"

"Quite. There's nothing wrong with me now except here." She touched her heart. "What's given, one can't get back. I would if I could. It's been so dread-

ful for you. But if I had them to see after, I shouldn't be able to think so much; the more I had to do, the better. I should like to begin it at once."

Winton nodded. Anything that could do her good—anything!

"Rosamund 'll help you find 'em," he muttered. "She's first-rate at all that sort of thing." Then, looking at her fixedly, he added: "Courage, my soul; it'll all come back some day."

Gyp forced herself to smile.

"And yet," she said, very quietly, "I wouldn't have been without it."

Her hands were clasped in her lap, her eyes shone strangely, the faint smile still hovered on her lips. Winton thought: 'Love! Beyond measure—beyond death!'

THE END